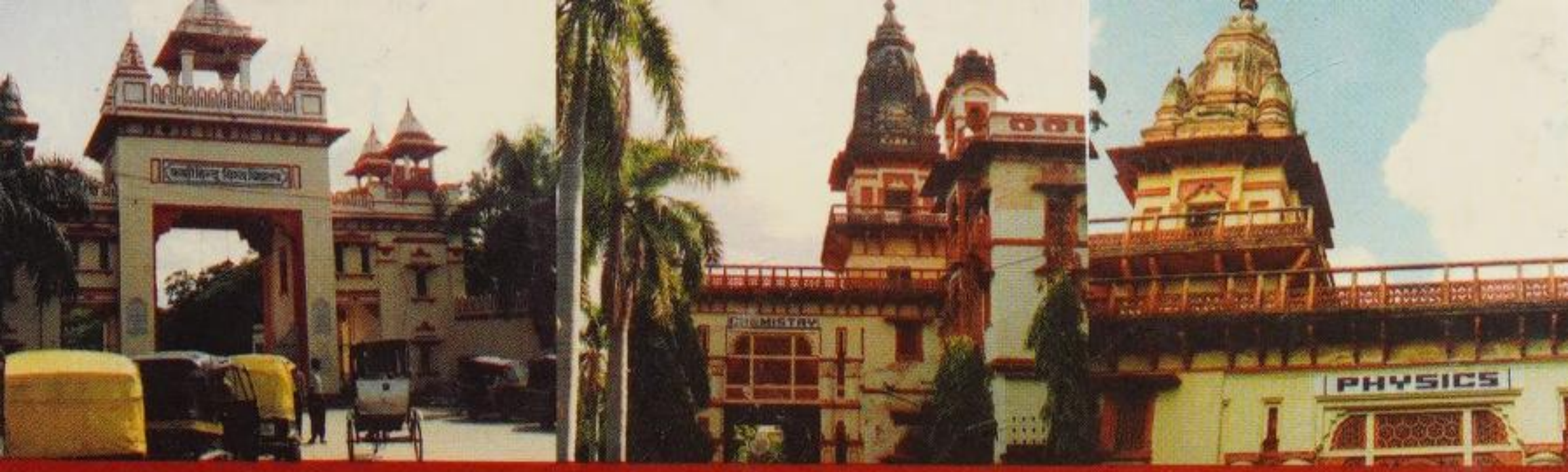
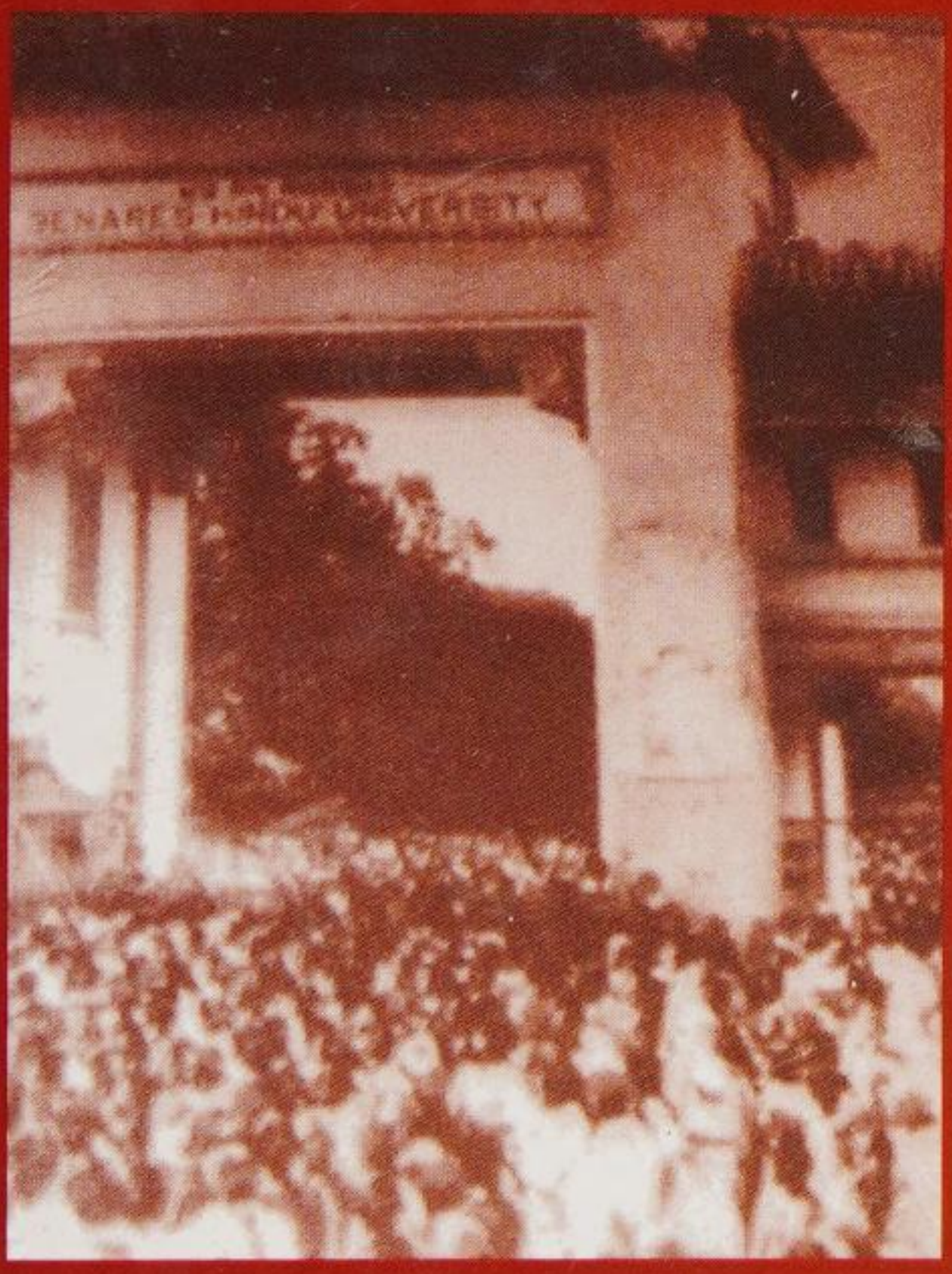


A Hindu Education

Early Years of the Banaras Hindu University



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A HINDU EDUCATION

A Hindu Education

Early Years of the Banaras Hindu University

Leah Renold

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For
Oliver, Pierre, Anjuli, and John

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Preface and Acknowledgments

In colonial India, Banaras Hindu University was an experiment in Hindu education. The British officials and Hindu founders of the University alike, were interested in the political and social potential of the institution. Education, they realized, was a powerful tool in shaping the destinies of people. Religion was an equally compelling influence. Compulsory religious instruction was a component of the great universities in England. Religious education, it was argued, promoted character building, as well as the moral fervour of patriotism. During the Indian independence movement, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) played a major role in the creation of the nationalist sentiment. This book explores the nature of education at BHU, one of the influential Indian institutions of the late colonial period.

What is a Hindu education? What does it mean to be a Hindu? What is Hindu identity? What makes an institution Hindu? Can religious identity coexist with modern western education? Did caste, religion, or gender act as a limitation to an individual's potential to contribute? What are the implications of having a national university that promotes the religion of the majority in the midst of a pluralist nation? What is the role of religion in nationalism? These were some of the questions which BHU faced during its first three decades of existence.

The man behind the experiment, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, was the founder of BHU. Pandit Malaviya received a western education in India. He was a political activist, playing a major role in the independence movement. He was also a conservative Hindu in his personal practice, and a leading proponent of Hinduism in colonial India. Today Pandit Malaviya is revered by many as an exemplar of the perfect Hindu. Others view his legacy negatively, accusing him of creating a nursery of religious antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. Regardless creating an institution that has had a significant influence upon the Indian society. Many graduates of BHU during pre-independence years took leading positions in various spheres of Indian society once India became independent. The nature of the Hindu education formulated by

Pandit Malaviya is of interest in understanding the shaping of modern India.

The historical scholarship on modern India, however, has paid little attention to BHU. The work of S. L. Dar and S. Somaskandan, *History of Banaras Hindu University* made an important start in chronicling the major events in the development of the University.[1] Jurgen Lütt's, 'The Movement for the Foundation of the Benares Hindu University',[2] enlarged upon the events leading to the establishment of the institution in 1915. There has been no research, though, on the manner in which Hinduism was institutionalized within the University, on the nature of Hindu education at BHU, or the association in-between BHU and religious nationalism.

The following chapters offer the results of venturing into the historical evidence of BHU to understand the nature and influence of Hindu education at the University. Part I, consisting of the first four chapters, situates the establishment of BHU in the context of the religious significance of Varanasi, colonialism, and the Indian independence movement. Chapter 1, 'Raising the Banner of Hinduism in Colonial India', considers the University in the wider context of a movement to foster Hindu identity in response to the colonial situation, to the monolithic claims of Christianity, and as a means to political power. This chapter discusses the western attitudes toward Hinduism during the colonial period, as well as Indian reactions to colonial perceptions of Hinduism. It also considers reform movements and the figures of Annie Besant and Pandit Malaviya, their role in the revival of Hinduism, and their educational efforts.

Chapter 2, 'A Leap in the Dark: The Chartering of Hindu and Muslim Universities', chronicles the establishment of the University alongside that of the sister institution, Aligarh Muslim University. The almost simultaneous rise of the two universities was an important moment in the development of ethnic/religious identity and Indian nationalism. The chapter addresses the intentions of the various supporters of the University, including the reasons for the British support for founding of BHU.

1 S. L. Dar and S. Somaskandan, *History of Banaras Hindu University* (Banaras: BHU, 1966).

2 Jurgen Lütt, 'The Movement for the Foundation of the Benares Hindus University', *German Scholars on India*, ed. Cultural Department of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany (New Delhi: 1976), Vol. 2, pp. 160–95.

Chapter 3, 'On Holy Ground: The Politics and Myth of Sacred Geography', addresses the significance of the location of the University in the holy city of Varanasi. The very mundane procedure of acquiring land for the University through a land acquisition order is contrasted with the myth of the University's origin, which effectively blots out the British role its the creation and absorbs the national university into the social structure of the city.

The differing responses of Pandit Malaviya and Mahatma Gandhi to colonialism and their education philosophies are covered in Chapter 4, 'Gandhi's Challenge to BHU: Boycott of BHU and Nationalist Education'. Soon after its establishment, Gandhi called for a boycott of the institution. Gandhi's call for student political activism and manual labour is contrasted with Pandit Malaviya's insistence on the need to create well-educated young citizens.

Part II is devoted to exploring life on the campus during the early years of BHU, particularly under the influence of Pandit Malaviya. Chapter 5, 'Taking the High Seat: Religious Authority and the *Karmayoga* of Education at BHU', discusses the attempt by Pandit Malaviya to establish a British style compulsory religious education at BHU. It further discusses the imposition of religious studies dominated by Brahmans and the opposition to this domination at the University, and the eventual relaxing of rules regarding compulsory religious education. The chapter also focuses on the religious interpretation of western knowledge as sacred knowledge and the defining of the university teaching profession as Karmayoga by Pandit Malaviya. Chapter 6, 'In the Temple of Learning: The Cultural and Academic Atmosphere of BHU' explains the way the University culturally defined itself as Hindu through architecture, colour, time, clothing, and lifestyle. Exploring the academic climate of the University, the chapter looks at the embrace of modernity at the University, the curriculum and the popularity of certain courses, and the neglect of religious courses of study. The evidence of diverse intellectual environment is evidenced by material production of the University. The life of the students is covered in Chapter 7, 'Tradition Unseated: BHU Students and the Quest for Identity'. Students from an entire range of high and low caste backgrounds, as well as Muslim, Sikh, Parsee, and Christian students attended BHU. Their daily routines, dining arrangements and practice of religious rituals, and extracurricular activities are detailed in this chapter. Issues concerning differences of religion, caste, and political persuasion on campus are also a concern. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the radicalizing of nationalist activism on

campus and Pandit Malaviya's attitude towards the nature of student activism.

What was the nature of Hindu education at BHU? How successful was the University's attempt to blend traditional religious education with western education? How did the University function to shape Hindu identity among its students? Did BHU have a role in nurturing religious nationalism? Investigating the nature of Hindu education at BHU, the book considers the role of the establishment of the University in the formation of a new Hindu identity. The work chronicles attempts at BHU to define a Hinduism that could be taught in the context of a western institution, and unite students from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.

I am grateful for the privilege to conduct research on the history of BHU. It is a huge responsibility to draw up a historical description of any such institution. I had expectations of what I would find at BHU, but I tried to remain open to whatever the historical record would reveal. I often felt that I was being totally arrogant in thinking that I could march into such a place as Varanasi and come away with an understanding of the complex and mind-boggling events. The work I have accomplished is all based on persistence, grace, and the willingness of others to help me.

I have learned much and have been greatly changed by my experience while conducting this research. To make progress in my research, I had to progress spiritually. I have learned something about faith. In Varanasi, I quickly discovered that things were not under my control. I could not simply wake up in the morning, decide what I was going to do that day and expect everything to go smoothly. I had to deal with a host of people, who often suspected the motivations and intelligence of a female American scholar nosing about for information. I could not simply barge in and expect them to oblige me. I had to put aside my agenda and take time to make an honest connection with the people I encountered, from the most important figures at the University to the rickshaw drivers on whom I was so dependent. I had to trust that my work would somehow get done. I was greatly rewarded for doing so. I was deeply touched by so many people. These same people helped me complete my work. One of my most memorable moments was an afternoon spent with an elderly gentleman, Rustam Satin, known as the 'Marxist firebrand of Banaras', who so overwhelmed me with kindness that I kissed him on the cheek. He kissed me back. Such brief or enduring moments of connection and understanding are the ground of knowledge.

The idea for researching the history of BHU resulted from participation in a course taught by Gail Minault at the University of Texas at Austin on the history of religious reform movements in India. I had been intrigued by the very name of Banaras Hindu University. What do they teach there, I wondered? In the class, we discussed BHU only briefly in the context of the formation of separate religious identities in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After the course ended, Minault suggested that I join a project team researching the role of higher education in the formation of ethnic identity in India. We were awarded the Ford Foundation Area Studies—Social Science Research Grant for our project. I was able to spend the summer of 1994 at the India Office Library in London collecting materials related to BHU. I presented my initial findings at the Regional Association of Asian Studies Conference and at the Ford Foundation Seminar Series on ethnicity and conflict at the University of Texas.

In order to pursue my research for another paper I was to present at the Association of Asian Studies in Washington D.C. in April 1995, I travelled to Banaras for the Christmas break. While I was collecting my material, I also tried to determine what resources were available on the history of BHU and on my chances of being allowed to use them. For the purpose, I visited the various university officials, including the then Vice Chancellor, D. N. Misra, the Registrar, and, Former Registrar of Banaras Hindu University, S. K. Srivastava. I also met the librarians of the BHU library, the Bharat Kala Museum, and the Malaviya Bhavan, as well as the active and retired faculty members, alumni, and patrons whose co-operation was vital for accomplishing research at BHU. I also visited the Theosophical Society in Banaras, as the Theosophists Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das had played significant roles in the foundation of BHU. I found several people who had personal experience of the early years of BHU and who had known Pandit Malaviya. I was pleased to find that the various people I met were enthusiastic about the project and very cooperative. The Vice Chancellor of BHU assured me that I would be allowed to use the official records of the University, including the records of the University Court, the Executive Council, and the Academic Council. But I was also made aware of the challenges of the project. I found that the University did not have an actual archive. Other than the chief administrative records, I would have to undertake an extensive search for materials. I also found that the situation on the campus was often politically volatile. To enter the University library, I had to pass through a gauntlet of police who were protecting the building. Students had

recently tried to destroy the grand structure as a means of protest. Due to student activism, I had to wait for two weeks to get an appointment with the Vice Chancellor. When the morning of the interview arrived, I found the entrance to the road leading to the campus blocked by a police barricade that refused my rickshaw entrance. The police said that students were rioting. I had to convince the police to let me through, then walk through a couple of hundred students outside the gates of the campus, then ask permission from the students who had the gates locked to see the Vice Chancellor. The project was clearly going to take some measure of determination and patience.

When I returned to Banaras on an American Institute of Indian Studies Dissertation Grant, I faced a serious obstacle. Before journeying to Banaras I had written a letter to the new Vice Chancellor, Hari Gautam, again requesting to view the University records. Once I arrived in Banaras, I attempted to set-up an appointment with the Vice Chancellor but was told to meet with the Registrar, C. M. Jariwala. After several postponed meetings, the Registrar told me that the University records were not open to the public and I would not be allowed to see them. I decided I would do all I could to change their minds, but in the meantime I would pursue other avenues of research. Continuing a video project I had begun in the summer of 1995 with funding from a Summer Study Abroad Fellowship from the Center for Asian Studies, I located people who had been at BHU before independence and arranged videotaped interviews. I was surprised how quickly these elderly people became video savvy. In a search for literary documentation, I found a number of journals published by BHU, not at BHU, but at the Theosophical Library in Kamaccha. The BHU library had later issues of journals, graduate records, and secondary material on the life of Pandit Malaviya and Banaras. Official documents related to the acquisition of the site for the University were located at the Banaras Archive in Sigra. I travelled to Allahabad to consult the Regional Archives. There were no useful materials as all the records had been sent to the Uttar Pradesh State Archives in Lucknow. But I did find that the grandson of Pandit Malaviya, Justice Giridhar Malaviya, lived in Allahabad. I arranged for an interview and travelled back to Allahabad to spend a Sunday afternoon with him. He assured me that he would do what he could to help me see the BHU administrative records.

The day eventually came when I was led into the executive offices of the University by the Registrar to view the records and to take notes by hand of their contents. After completing that work, I interviewed several

former students and faculty members of the University, then went to Lucknow to work at the State Archives, where the Uttar Pradesh Educational Records and detailed police reports of the political activity of BHU students during the independence movement are located. At the National Archives in New Delhi, I found records of the Government of India pertaining to the University, Native Newspaper Reports and issues of Pandit Malaviya's newspaper, *Abhyudaya*. At the Nehru Memorial Library, Teen Murti, I viewed the new collection of Pandit Malaviya papers (which was very limited), contemporaneous periodicals, and a number of the Oral Histories Records. I took note of anything associated directly or indirectly with BHU. Restricting the focus of the project to the issues of Hindu identity and the nature of Hindu ideology at BHU, I used only a portion of the material garnered from these various sources.

I would like to thank Gail Minault for guiding this study, for nursing a sometimes-flagging confidence, and for providing an example of excellent historical scholarship. I am also grateful to the other professors composing my dissertation committee, Robert Hardgrave Jr., W. Roger Louis, Howard Miller, and Herman van Olphen, for their insights, suggestions, careful reading, and editing. I would also like to thank A. K. Narain, formerly of BHU and Professor Emeritus of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, for interviews and for agreeing to read and offer comments on this work.

For funding this project I am grateful to the American Institute for Indian Studies. A Junior Research Fellowship made possible my dissertation research in India during 1996–7. A Ford Foundation Social Science and Area Studies Grant and a Dora Bonham Grant of the History Department of the University of Texas allowed me to spend the summer of 1994 collecting materials on BHU at the India Office Library in London. A University of Texas Study Abroad Fellowship provided funds for travelling to India in the summer of 1995 to begin interviewing former students and faculty of BHU. I am also indebted to Richard Larivierre, Dean of Liberal Arts, and Patrick Olivelle of the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Texas, for providing a stimulating learning environment and financial support for my studies.

I am very grateful to Giridhar Malaviya, Justice of the Allahabad High Court and grandson of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, for offering his support for this study. I would like to thank Hari Gautam, Vice Chancellor of BHU, for allowing me to use the official records of the University, as also C. M. Jariwala, the Registrar of BHU for his help. R. C. Sharma of Bharat Kala Bhavan was most considerate in providing

materials, as was Lakshmi Datt Vyas. I would like to thank S. Somaskandan, former Registrar and co-author of *History of the Banaras Hindu University*, for his willingness to offer guidance and comments. I thank Visvanath Pandey, Public Relations Officer of BHU for his encouragement, Ram Mohan Pandey for his advice and for supplying copies of the BHU journal, *Prajna*, and his wife and daughters Prachi and Prajna, for their kindness and hospitality. Arup Muzamdar of Malaviya Bhavan offered assistance in finding material. A. N. Tiwari, librarian of the Telang Library of the Central Hindu School for Boys was kind in sharing materials and giving a tour of the former location of Annie Besant's Central Hindu College. I offer special thanks to B. N. Singh, head librarian of the BHU Library, for his untiring help and enthusiasm.

I interviewed a number of former faculty members and students who were at BHU during the pre-independence years and others who had some knowledge of the early years of the University. Being with these remarkable people was the most personally rewarding part of my research. Among those whom I thank for sharing their experiences of BHU are Sadiq and Shanti Sadiq Ali, Badruddin, Amitabha Bhattacharya, Dudh Nath Chaturvedi, Sitaram Chaturvedi, Yogendra P. Dubey, Lallanji Gopal, Gulum Mohammed, A. K. Narain, Pran Nath, Pushpa Pratap, V. A. Raman, Nirmala Sharma, Leela Sharma, Prem Lata Sharma, B. M. Shukla and Annapurna Shukla, Hiralal Singh, K. P. Singh, Ram Avadh Singh, R. C. P. Sinha, Ramdulari Sinha, Hari Har Nath Tripathi, Visvanath Tripathi, Baldev Upadhyaya, and Yadurnandan Upadhyaya.

I thank the late Maharaja of Banaras, Vibhuti Narayan Singh for granting an interview and allowing me to use the Ramnagar Library. S. Nair, the secretary of the Maharaja, helped me find the needed information. I would like to thank Richard Bingle, retired senior staff member of the India Office Library, for gracious hospitality and help. In India, Pradeep Mahendiratta and Lakhbir Singh Suri of the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) in New Delhi were very helpful, as were Jagdish Singh Yadav of the AIIS Library in Ram Nagar, and the staff of the AIIS Hindi Programme in Banaras. I must thank Ratnesh Pathak, my research assistant, his wife Neelima, and their son, Utkarsh, for not only helping with translation and accompanying me on various excursions, but for sharing many happy hours at Lolark Kund. Profound thanks are due to dear Gita Tripathi for giving me a place I can call home in Banaras. I also thank my friends Jeane Fitzsimmons, and Jayson Jones for their companionship and joviality in Banaras. I am grateful to Sita Ram Khetan and Kashi Mumuksha Bhavan for allowing me the peace of the ashram

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Introduction

Today Banaras Hindu University (BHU) is a major university in India. The University's website describes the student body of 15,000 as being from all streams of life, castes, and religions. The opening page of the site features the following message:

> India is not a country of the Hindus only. It is a country of the Muslims, the Christians and the Parsees too. The country can gain strength and develop itself only when the people of the different communities in India live in mutual good-will and harmony. It is my earnest hope and prayer that this center of life and light which is coming into existence, will produce students who will not only be intellectually equal to the best of their fellow students in others parts of the world, but will also live a noble life, love their country and be loyal to the Supreme ruler.[1]

The founder, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, delivered the message while India was still under colonial domination. The ruler to whom he referred was the British monarch. Shortly after independence, BHU was incorporated into the national education system of India as a secular institution. Pandit Malaviya, however, had established the University in 1915 as a specifically Hindu institution. The indigenous wealth of India, that of princes, financiers and businessmen, and the support of the British government, had enabled Pandit Malaviya to pursue the creation of a modern university offering a Hindu education.

BHU has played an important role in the process of nation building in India since its founding. The students and faculty played a significant role in the independence movement. The graduates of the institution are evidences of the enormous contribution of the University towards the management of Indian affairs by the Indians. This modern University offers degrees in humanities, social sciences, technology, medicine, science, fine arts, and performing arts. BHU graduates have gone to all parts of India to take leading positions in the country. The University has played a major role in making India self-sufficient in competent professionals and leaders in many fields of industry, business, and government.

1 Banaras Hindu University, *www.bhu.ac.in* (1 June 2004).

BHU is located in the holy city of Varanasi. Banaras (or Benares) was the British name for the city. The University also has a Sanskrit name, Kashi Hindu Vishvavidyalaya. Kashi (Light) was the ancient name of the city. The 'City of Light' is considered one of the holy sites in the Hindu tradition. It is home to several *tirtha*s or 'crossing over places' between heaven and earth and is itself considered a tirtha. Varanasi has long had a reputation as a place of sacred learning and has many temples, as well as schools. In Varanasi, people often refer to BHU as a 'temple of learning' and the University buildings are built to resemble Hindu temples. The campus is often included on religious pilgrimages.

Many Indians celebrated the creation of a Hindu university as a triumph for what has been called the 'renaissance' of Hinduism. Agehananda Bharati writes that the renaissance was 'by all possible standards, a revival, a revival that began to materialize during the early days of the British Raj and reached its consummation around the time of Indian independence.'[2] Contact with the West brought about significant changes in religious manifestations, the most significant of which was the development of the concept of a unified religious identity of the Hindus. Western observers of religion in India and Hindu apologists alike influenced the adaptation of Hindu traditions to the colonial situation, producing a reformulation of religious ideas and practices, which embraced, in part, the western scientific perspective. The University, which was intended as a means to merge traditional religion with a modern institution of higher education, was a product of this period. For the first time, traditional Indian subjects were taught within the context of a western institution, the university.

Previous to the foundation of BHU, the existing universities in India offered a strictly western and secular education. The British established the first three universities of India—Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras—in 1857, the year of the Indian Mutiny. As suggested by the Educational Despatch of 1854 (a declaration of the British government for the purpose of higher education in India), the three Indian universities were created for 'the diffusion of the improved arts, science, philosophy and literature of Europe; in short of European knowledge.'[3] The narrow

2 Agehananda Bharati, 'The Hindu Renaissance and its Apologetic Patterns', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 24:2, 1970, p. 268.

3 Despatch of 1854, *Selections from Educational Records, Part 2 1840–1859*, compiled by J. A. Richey (Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, India, 1922), p. 366.

purpose with which they were founded was to create an army of clerks and minor officials required for the low-cost and smooth running of the machinery of British administration in the country. For twenty-five years, the three universities served the educational needs of the whole country by functioning as purely examining and affiliating bodies. Colleges were affiliated to the different universities. The curricula of the colleges were designed to prepare students to take the university exams in order to receive their diplomas.

The British created two more universities in the late nineteenth century. To meet the needs of an increasing student population, Panjab University was established in 1882 and Allahabad University in 1887. Allahabad University, the alma mater of Pandit Malaviya, was the only university in the United Provinces. With the move of the High Court from Agra to Allahabad, the University became a bastion of anglicization, as the High Court gave priority to English as a medium of instruction for law degrees.[4] Allahabad University, which neglected the vernaculars in higher education and Indian academic subjects, was criticized for refusing affiliation to any college that did not have a European principal.

Many in India supported the foundation of a national system of education that would pay due respect and deference to the indigenous culture and traditions, and cater to the needs of Indians instead of the Raj. The initial attempts to create national education were a part of the socio-religious reform movements. In the late nineteenth century, the Arya Samaj established the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic schools and colleges, as well as traditional *gurukuls* that emphasized and reformed the Hindu culture. In 1892, the leaders of the Singh Sabha movement established the Khalsa College in Amritsar. Khalsa College became the most important institution for the Sikhs, dedicated to the revival of Sikh religion through religious studies and literature. In 1898, Annie Besant's proposal for the Central Hindu College in Banaras was welcomed by many as a step in the similar direction. At this College, students were supposed to study the Hindu shastras along with western education. Even though some people did not think that the national education at Besant's college went far enough, there was a successful transformation of the Central Hindu College into Banaras Hindu University in 1915. BHU was upheld as the first truly national university in India, one that would

4 M. L. Bhargava, *Hundred Years of Allahabad University* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1987), p. 87.

promote Hindu religion and culture.[5] As Gyanendra Pandey has written, the cultural nationalism of these institutions imparted to Indian nationalism a distinct Hindu appearance, and played a significant role in the development of both nationalism and the Congress party.[6]

As a national institution, BHU has not always been identified with the positive and courageous aspects of Indian nationalism, but rather with the negative and destructive elements of religious fanaticism and bigotry. Some scholars have considered Pandit Malaviya's efforts to promote Hindu interests and identity, particularly in his work with the Hindu Mahasabha (an organization dedicated to protecting Hindu interests) as being at odds with the higher purpose of national integration. Pandit Malaviya is sometimes portrayed not as a heroic nationalist, but rather sinisterly as a 'staunch Hindu.'[7] Malaviya's religious revivalism is blamed for fostering communal identity in opposition to national identity. For example, Paul Brass wrote, 'Malaviya's revivalism . . . led almost inevitably to communal conflict.'[8] In a similar vein, the establishment of BHU in 1915 has been blamed in part by scholars for widespread communal riots which occurred at various places in northern India in 1921–3.[9] Scholars have associated both Pandit Malaviya and the University with right-wing Hindu politics:

> Realizing the functional importance of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as the Hindu counterparts to the separatist Muslims, Pandit Malaviya patronized both these organizations, and in 1938 permitted the RSS to construct a two-room building on the Benares Hindu University campus for carrying on its activities. RSS claimed to aim at revitalizing Hindu-

5 According to *United Provinces Native Newspaper Reports*, No. 6 of 1916, p.131, the editor of the *Rohilkhand Gazette* (Bareilly) of 8 Feb. 1916 remarked that 'the event will be written large in the history of India as being the first instance of Government's entrusting Indians directly with the management and control of an educational institution.' The same report, p.130, stated that the editor of the *Leader* regarded the establishment of the opening of the university as the 'birth of the Hindu Renaissance'.

6 Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh: 1926–34: A Study in Imperfect Mobilization* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 59.

7 Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), p. 9.

8 Paul Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State: The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1965), p. 20.

9 Anil Baran Ray, *Students and Politics in India* (Delhi: Manohar, 1977), pp. 26f.

ism and molding the Hindus of India into a conscious unity. BHU aimed at essentially the same goal. The RSS could, therefore, be regarded in a sense as the product of the university, i.e., a manifestation of the same Hindu sentiment that marked the movement for the university.[10]

Historians have chalked up the University, not as a major instrument of nationalism, but as a counterfeit, a hotbed of right-wing Hindu nationalism, a nursery of communalism.

It is often assumed that nationalism thrives only in modern, secular cultures. Nationalism is not regarded as a natural product of traditional, and religiously-oriented cultures. As Benedict Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities*, nationalism is a modern phenomenon based on the political and economic circumstances of the western world.[11] Anderson believes that national and social identities were imposed on nations as a part of the western capitalist discourse of power that held that a modern capitalist society requires a national culture that is both homogeneous and secular. Anderson's argument corresponds to the earlier work of Louis Dumont, who held that nationalism presupposes a modern, secular culture in which individuals are united not on the basis of religion but on the basis of their political will, common history, and territory.[12] Religion, in a secular culture, is not a public but a private affair. Dumont believed that nationalism in India was corrupt and underdeveloped because Indian society was dominated by traditional religious culture. Communalism, according to Dumont, was the maleficent result of this combination of the modern ideas of nationalism and of traditional religious culture. The Indian scholar Bipin Chandra has argued that the Indians, prior to the importation of western ideas, never possessed an indigenous conception of nationalism.[13] Nationalist thought in India was derived solely from European nationalist thought. Chandra argues that religious identity, which served in western nations to unite peoples, could not work in India because of the plurality of religions, and led only to communalism. Nationalism based on religious identity would be unauthentic and counter-productive to true nationalism. The lack of a common culture led Indians to rely chiefly upon anti-British, anti-imperialist

10 Ibid., p. 28.
11 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
12 Louis Dumont, *Religion, Politics and History in India* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970).
13 Bipin Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979).

resentment as a common bond upon which to base national identity. Nationalism in India, according to Chandra, had no other grounding.

According to the above notions of nationalism, BHU, as a religious institution dedicated to promoting Hindu unity and national identity, would be credited not with inspiring secular unity and true nationalism, but divisiveness. The particularly Indian phenomenon of communalism would be its natural fruit. The University that prided itself on offering a Hindu education would be categorized as a Hindu nationalist institution, born from the incompatible marriage of traditional religious and modern secular culture. There are problems, though, with such a theory as it assumes a complete divorce between the two categories of culture. Social institutions and organizations are not always exclusively one or the other. Therefore, this formula cannot be applied to the University without examining the actual life of the University.

What was the nature of Hindu education at BHU? In promoting Hinduism and nationalism, did BHU play a significant role in creating a vision of independent India as exclusively Hindu or dominated by Hindus that would stand against secular democracy? Can we call the attitudes that developed at the University religious nationalism, or were other factors at play that complicate the equation? To answer these questions, one has to look more closely at the University in the context of colonialism and the renaissance of Hinduism.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Raising the Banner of Hinduism in Colonial India

The early years of Banaras Hindu University are placed within a dynamic period of Indian history, when social changes, economic transformations, religious reform and revival, and nationalism emerged from the context of colonialism. The British government gave official sanction for the establishment of the University. The founding of the institution was also part of a wider effort to revive Hinduism. The interest in the revival of Hinduism as a vibrant force in the colonial state arose in large part due to defining of religious groups by the British, the disparagement of Hinduism by the colonizers, and the response of Hindus and sympathetic Europeans to both. Important figures in the resulting 'renaissance of Hinduism', Annie Besant and Pandit Malaviya contributed to the creation of the University. Education had been an important tool of the colonizers and the reformers of Hinduism believed it vital to their cause of uplifting and uniting the Hindus.

The history of the concept of Hinduism as a single unitary religion, to be compared with the other world religions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism, is caught up in the politics and colonial status of India. The British and Europeans had much to do with the wholescale classification of a multiplicity of peoples as Hindu. Many of the British assumed that the religion they encounter in India would be a vastly inferior, even false, version of Christianity. The religion, despite its many failings, superstitions, customs, and rituals, would have certain commonalities that applied to all its adherents; it would have a definable scripture, recognized authorities or teachers of a body of doctrine. European scholars of Indian religion and culture, the so-called Orientalists, tended to confirm this view. In their research, they looked for signs of religion as defined by western perceptions. They identified Brahmans as religious experts, or 'clergy'. Orientalist scholars, such as Max Müller, gave recognition to certain ancient Sanskrit texts as 'scriptures'. But

even Max Müller, who translated the numerous Sanskrit texts that comprise the *Sacred Texts of the East* volumes, did so with the idea of exhibiting the primitiveness of Hindu religious scriptures to the western-educated Indians who could not read the Sanskrit texts.

Müller commented on the efforts of Professor H. H. Wilson, who held the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at Oxford, to interpret the *Rig Veda*. Müller wrote, 'If Wilson would write from the standpoint of a missionary, and would show how the knowledge and bringing into light of the Veda would upset the whole existing system of Indian theology, it might become of real interest.'[1] Apparently there was an ulterior motive for Müller's translation of the *Rig Veda* and the other Sanskrit texts. In 1856, Müller wrote that he wanted to go to India and learn the language to see if he were capable of taking part in the work 'by means of which the old mischief of Indian priestcraft could be overthrown and the way opened for the entrance of simple Christian teaching'.[2] After the death of H. H. Wilson, Max Müller was nominated for the Sanskrit professorship at Oxford. In *Life and Letters of Max Müller*, a letter by one of Müller's supporters at Oxford, Dr Pusey, argued that 'Max Müller has already done more for the Gospel in India than any other Sanskrit scholars.'[3]

Scholars such as Max Müller and other writers were heirs to over two hundred years of efforts by Europeans to interpret Hinduism. Even without missionary intent, Europeans had little ability to describe the religion of India except in Christian terms. Scholars, finding philosophical assumptions and ethical teachings in Hindu texts, made a distinction between popular religious practices (which they condemned) and the higher philosophical elements of Hinduism, which seemed similar to the western concepts. The process of interpreting Hinduism in the light of western ideas was lengthy, but the conclusions were often decidedly negative.[4] While British administrators of the Government of India, scholars, missionaries, and other visitors to India had ample first-hand opportunity to observe the customs of the Hindus, their perceptions were often coloured by cultural and religious bias. Colonial domination, the

1 Max Müller in letter to Chevalier Bunsen, July 1850, in *Life and Letters of Max Müller,* Vol. 1, edited by Georgina Max Müller (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1902), p. 117.
2 Ibid., 25 August 1856, p. 192.
3 Ibid., p. 253.
4 P. J. Marshall, ed., *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 20.

superiority complex suffered by the British in India, and the strict separation of 'whites' from 'blacks', did little to promote respect for the religion of the Hindus. Instead, the perpetrators of colonialism partook not only of the construction of Hinduism as a unified religious system, but in its demonization as well.

Many British and European observers of Indian culture, especially missionaries, considered the Hindu religion as degenerate and Hindus themselves as a superstitious and weak people, incapable of governing themselves. Travel accounts, which became a popular genre of literature during the height of western imperialism, contained tales of snake charmers and opium eaters, of widows being burned alive, and of infants being sacrificed. The writings of Captain Leopold von Orlich were typical of the accounts of travel in India that attested to what was regarded as the degenerate state of this exotic land. In the eyes of von Orlich, who travelled in India during 1842–3, the land of the Hindus was in need of redemption. The Hindus were physically, intellectually, and morally unfit, their religion corrupt and idolatrous, and their gods horrific:

> Besides many million of gods, there are seventeen deities who are chiefly worshiped by the Hindoos . . . . Shiva, say the Pooranas, wanders upon the earth, sometimes laughing, and sometimes screaming, surrounded by spirits and goblins, intoxicated, naked, with his hair clotted and disheveled, and strewn with the ashes of funeral pie, and his neck and arms hung about with human bones and skulls. His wife, who appears under three distinct names, Doorga, Parbattee and Kalle or Devee, is held in equal veneration, and is represented in a still more revolting form . . . . A thousand goats and other animals are sacrificed every month in her temple at Calcutta; and in Bindhya-basini, the blood shed in front of her image is never permitted to dry. Equally bloody sacrifices are offered to Shiva; for on certain days in the year martyrs are seen going in solemn procession to the temple, with their lips and tongues slit, and knives sticking in them, and their bodies entwined with living serpents.[5]

The demonizing of the gods of India served to fuel the machinery of cultural imperialism. When Hinduism was spoken of as a degenerate, false religion, the British could confirm their conquest of India politically and ideologically as inherently beneficial to a people living in darkness.

Europeans described Hindus as a vastly inferior species. Captain

5 Leopold von Orlich, *Travels in India including the Sind and the Punjab*, Vol. 2, translated from the German by H. Evans Lloyd, (Lahore: East and West Publishing, 1976), pp. 246–7, first published in London by Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1845.

Orlich, in his travel account, described the Hindus as inherently weak:

> No men of distinguished imminence have arisen among them. They appear like tropical plants, which rapidly arrive at maturity: they attain their physical and intellectual perfection too prematurely to be vigorous and durable: they are tall and slender, but their nerves and muscles are weak, and they have no stamina. It is evident, that among them brilliant schoolboys seldom enter into life as eminent men . . . .The few exceptions, among whom Rammohun Roy cannot be wholly excluded, are distinguished only as Hindus, and would never have been considered great men in our own country.[6]

The characterization of the subject people as weak was a prevailing theme of colonialism. As Madan Sarup argued, such colonial views of group virtues and vices, which accentuated group ethnic differences, denigrated even the most 'advanced' among the colonized peoples.[7] While there were many exceptions to the rule, the Hindus, were often considered an altogether weak and degenerate race, in need of both British governance and Christian redemption.

Many government administrators and missionaries alike hoped that Christianity would gradually replace the inferior religions of the world and bring progress and light to humankind. Imperialism, as a carrier of western values, would be a major instrument for the salvation of the human race. Missionary schools such as the General Assembly Institution of the Presbyterian Church of Calcutta, conducted by Alexander Duff, hoped to educate young Indians in western subjects, as well as to convert them to Christianity. An essay question for an examination in the school asked the students to write on 'The Comparison of Christianity and Hindooism'. An exam essay by one of the students read:

> How can we compare it [Hinduism] with Christianity? Christianity raises man to his proper dignity—to glory: purifies his moral nature, and instead of obliterating the properties of man, sanctifies and purifies them; in a word, converts an immoral, weak, sinful world into a paradise, animated by enlightened, purified, and sanctified human beings, who live together in endless and undying love in joy and happiness. Popular Hindooism is the mother of ignorance, of superstition, of vice, impiety, and misery: it is the grossest idolatry.[8]

In the eyes of missionaries there was nothing redemptive in Hindu religion, nothing that was suggestive of true religion. The missionaries

6 Ibid., p. 275.
7 Madan Sarup, *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 160.
8 Orlich, *Travels in India*, p. 281.

travelled even into the Hindu heartland, to Banaras to spread their message, largely through education.[9] As Vasudha Dalmia has written, missionary activity, which existed in Banaras from 1816, significantly increased during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, from the lieutenant governorship of James Thomason (1843–53), when missionaries took to the streets of the city:

> The Christian offensive was by no means confined to learned disputation, treatises or pamphleteering. Emboldened by the favourable political situation, the more eloquent of the missionaries practised regular street preaching. The issues were necessarily simplified, but they reached the man on the street incessantly and insistently. This street preaching had excited much hostility through the decades after the Mutiny, but the missionary carried with him the immunity stemming from 'the imperial prestige of the conquering race' and this emboldened him to display an insolence regarding all other religions.[10]

The almost resolute condemnation of Hinduism consigned the Hindus to a fallen position in a world dominated by the forces of Christendom.

9 Ibid., p. 137, Orlich wrote of passing near a Hindu school in Banaras in 1843:

> Close to the school we met two missionaries, who were preaching the Gospel in the open air, to an assembled multitude of Hindoos and Mussalmans. One of them seemed to produce a powerful effect upon his hearers, for the greater part listened to his words with the most riveted attention, nay, some with evident devotions; but I was informed that their high and holy work takes but little hold here, although there are fourteen mission schools, one of which is for girls.

Louis Rousselet, in *India and Its Native Princes—Travel in Central India and in the Presidencies of Bombay and Bengal*, translation of *L'Inde des Rajahs*, first published in 1876 (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Co., 1975), p. 553, wrote of the unusual tolerance displayed by the people of Banaras when a missionary preached in the midst of a holy place and condemned the religion of the Hindus:

> Is there a people in the world more tolerant than this good gentle Hindoo people, who have been so often described to us as cunning, cruel and even bloodthirsty? And in what country could such a spectacle be witnessed as that which met my eyes that day in this square of Benares? There, at ten paces from all that the Hindoo holds to be most sacred in religion, between the Source of Wisdom and the idol of Siva a Protestant missionary has taken his stand beneath a tree. Mounted on a chair, he was preaching in the Hindoostani language, on the Christian religion and the errors of paganism. I heard his shrill voice, issuing from the depths of a formidable shirt-collar, eject these words at the crowd, which respectfully and attentively surrounded him— 'You are idolaters! That block of stone which you worship has been taken from a quarry, it is no better than the stone of my house.'

10 Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu and Nineteenth-Century Banaras* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 109–11.

Among the world's religions, there was only one true religion, and that religion was the religion of the conquerors.

The British opinions of Hinduism had a subtle, but powerful effect on their Hindu subjects. There was a growing tendency, especially among western-educated Indians, to agree with their oppressors and to see their culture as degenerate. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a movement for reform and revival emerged through the various efforts of Rammohan Roy (1772–1833) founder of the Brahmo Samaj; Keshab Chandra Sen (1838–84), a leader of the Brahmo Samaj; Dayanand Saraswati (1824–83), founder of the Arya Samaj; and Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836–86) and his disciple Vivekananda (1863–1902).[11] The reformers, while working to create a renewed fervour and pride among the Hindus, also attempted to change elements of their religion that the British had condemned. The Brahmo Samaj preached against the worship of images. The founder of the organization, Rammohan Roy, was known for his support of education for women and western education for Hindus. The Arya Samaj taught that such practices as child marriage, idolatry, and a rigid caste system, had arisen in Hindu society because people had strayed from the original truths of the Vedic religion. The group called for a return to the pure faith of the Vedas. Ramakrishna, a mystic, revelled in the encounter he had with the divine through image worship, while at the same time believing that the divine was also accessible through other religions. Vivekananda, his disciple, taught that while other religions were exclusive, only Hinduism offered tolerance and acceptance of the many paths to God and was therefore the religion needed by the modern world. To counter the efforts of Christians in India, he founded the Ramakrishna Mission for the purpose of opening schools and giving aid to the needy.

These various efforts to uplift Hinduism also strove to ameliorate the inferior status delegated to Hindus and their religion by the colonial administration. Hindus were encouraged by religious leaders to be proud of their ancient traditions, traditions that had fallen into a state of decay, but were being revived with hopes of restoring them to their former glory. It was hardly a coincidence that leaders such as Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, and Aurobindo Ghose looked to Hindu traditions as a basis for Indian nationalism.

11 See Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*, Vol. 3/1 of *The New Cambridge History of India*, Gordon Johnson ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

ANNIE BESANT

Indians were not alone in their interests to reform and revive Hindu traditions. There were a number of Europeans who were active in this period. Surprisingly, in the early-twentieth century, it was a European woman, Annie Besant, who was one of the most active advocates of Hinduism and Indian nationalism. Upon her arrival in India in 1893, she quickly embraced India as her chosen homeland. Besant acquainted herself with the manners, customs, history, and religion of India. While she had been a sharp critic of the exclusivity and dogmatism of the Church of England, she wholeheartedly embraced the religion of the Hindus, becoming a rare European champion of the religion. Besant also adopted Hindu customs and dress in her daily life. An Indian friend, finding her admiration of Hindu culture slightly excessive, wrote, 'She admired, perhaps, not in a very discriminating manner, everything she found in our culture. I say, not in a very discriminating manner, because I think there were aspects of Indian culture which I would rather wish to be forgotten.'[12] Besant began to give lectures 'depicting in vivid language the glory and greatness of ancient Indian thought.'[13] She spoke against the westernizing of India and taught that for India to be great, the Indians needed to look to their own past and culture for inspiration.[14] Like the early reformer, Rammohan Roy, Besant supported social reforms and believed that western education was vital for the uplift of Hindus. Unlike Roy, she also supported traditional Hindu education, calling for a combination of the two spheres of knowledge. Besant came to play an important role in the founding of BHU. In order to see her ideas put into action, she founded the Central Hindu College, which was to later form the nucleus of BHU.

Annie Besant came to India under the auspices of the Theosophical Society. She had a tumultuous life in England, her former home. As an extremely radical woman for her time, she publicly championed a number of controversial causes from women's rights and birth control, to those of the Free Thought Movement, the radical Fabian Society, and the National Secular Society. In 1889, she joined the Theosophical

12 P. N. Sapru, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi.
13 Raj Kumar, *Annie Besant's Rise to Power in Indian Politics 1914-1917* (Delhi: Concept Publishing House, 1981), p. 41.
14 Annie Besant, *Children of the Motherland* (Banaras: Board of Trustees, Central Hindu College, 1906), p. 3.

Society after reading Madam Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*. The Theosophical Society in India invited her to join them. Besant soon became one of the leading figures of the movement.

The Theosophical Society was founded in the late-nineteenth century as a reaction to the growing rift between science and Christian denominations, and between orthodoxy and popular spiritualism. The Theosophical Society, founded in 1875 by Madame Helena Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steele Olcott, was a movement of religious dissent against the restrictive ideas of western Christianity.[15] As Donald S. Lopez has written, the Theosophical Society was also an attempt to merge spiritualism with the teachings of Darwin:

> Its goals included the formation of a universal brotherhood regardless of race, creed, sex, caste, or color; the encouragement of studies in comparative religion, philosophy, and science; and the investigation of unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man. It was in many ways a response to Darwin, yet rather than seeking in religion a refuge from science, it attempted to found a scientific religion, one that accepted the new discoveries in geology and embraced an ancient and esoteric system of spiritual evolution more sophisticated than Darwin's. The society was founded at the height of nineteenth-century America's interest in spiritualism, the belief that one could contact and communicate with the spirits of the dead, through séances, materialization, automatic writing, and other techniques. Madame Blavatsky was adept at these and other occult arts.[16]

The Theosophical Society was a very modern movement, which sought its roots in the ancient past.

Critical of Christianity, at least in its contemporaneous forms, the Theosophical Society embraced what they regarded as the more spiritual traditions of the ancient East, particularly Buddhism and Hinduism. When Blavatsky came to India in 1879, she found a receptive audience among the educated of India for the teachings of Theosophy. As Kenneth Jones writes, 'The Hindus responded to its criticisms of Christianity and western civilization, as well as to its praise of their own religion and culture. It strengthened Hindu conservatives and their attempts to revive orthodox Hinduism.'[17] During the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, thousands of Indians were attracted to the teachings of Theosophy, which granted Hinduism not only an equal, but also an elevated status

15 Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements*, p. 167.

16 Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 49–50.

17 Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements*, p. 179.

among world religions. The Theosophical Society played 'an important but ambiguous role in the Hindu renaissance in India and the Buddhist renaissance in Sri Lanka.'[18]

Annie Besant, as a member of the Theosophical Society, made a major contribution to the shaping of modern Hinduism by writing a series of textbooks on the essentials of Hinduism, the most famous of which was the *Sanatana Dharma: An Elementary Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics*.[19] In the textbooks, she presented Hinduism as single set of organized beliefs held by all Hindus. This was, of course, not the case, as there was great diversity of beliefs and practices among Hindus. But in outlining the tenets of Hinduism, she was interpreting Hinduism from a western perspective. Distilling the essentials of a faith into a single book was also a western practice, one entirely new to India. Besant wrote a series of books on Hindu belief to correspond to different age groups. She created a Hindu catechism for young children. Her *Elementary Textbook* was followed by the publication of the *Advanced Textbook on Sanatana Dharma* for the college students. The books were first used at the Central Hindu College of Banaras.[20]

In 1898, Annie Besant and her fellow Theosophist, Bhagavan Das of Banaras, founded the Central Hindu College. Bhagavan Das, equipped with both western education and Sanskrit learning, was well known for explaining the Sanskrit texts of Hinduism in a logical way, acceptable to the western-educated Indians.[21] He wrote numerous books that attempted

18 Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, p. 51.

19 Annie Besant, *Sanatana Dharma: An Elementary Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics* (Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, [1903] 1980).

20 The content and widespread popularity of these books will be discussed in Chapter 4, in the context of their use in BHU.

21 Rameshwari Nehru, in 'An Embodiment of Humility', Messages, *Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhagavan Das Dedication Souvenir* (Delhi: Dr. Bhagavan Das Memorial Trust, 1962 [publiction not paginated]) wrote:

He was born at a time when on account of the non-religious education given by the British Government the English educated section of the people had lost faith in the Hindu Dharm. Their ignorance of principles and tenets of the Sanatan Dharm was colossal. All that they knew about it was what they saw the ignorant masses practicing in the way of caste observance, untouchability, enforced widowhood, early marriage etc. in the name of religion. Naturally their minds revolted against these immoral practices as they erroneously considered these to be the projections of the Hindu Dharm. Movements of reform and renaissance like those of the Arya and the Brahmo Samaj had already started but their efforts were mostly confined to the Punjab and the Bengal. Besides these movements of reform which chose to present the Sanatana Dharm in a new light, rejecting parts they considered irrational and

to merge Hindu philosophy with scientific thought, including books such as *The Science of Self* and *Ancient Psycho-synthesis vs. Modern Psycho-analysis.* As Pushpa Pratap, who married into his family, wrote, 'He had no difficulty in reconciling his deep faith in the principles of Hinduism, with the eclectic temper of true Theosophist.'[22] The collaboration between Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das was based on a common devotion to promoting Hinduism. Bhagavan Das contributed a chapter to Besant's *Sanatana Dharma* textbook. They also collaborated in their well-known translation of the Bhagavadgita.[23]

The Central Hindu College was founded in Banaras with the object of imparting religious and moral instruction based on Hinduism, together with a thorough secular education. Besant's championing of Hinduism, particularly Brahmanical Hinduism, won her the support of many orthodox Hindus in Banaras, including the Maharaja of Banaras, who donated land for the College. Through contributions from the prominent Indians and Europeans, the College acquired an excellent library and a science laboratory. The collection included over fifteen thousand books. The College offered courses in western subjects as well as Sanskrit and modern Indian languages.[24] Hindu religion was taught at the college in accordance with Besant's interpretation of the religion in her *Sanatana Dharma*, in a modern, scientific, and coherent light as a unitary religion. Students were taught to say morning and evening prayers, were required to attend the daily prayer, and were taught for an hour every day the teachings of s*anatana* dharma from the textbooks written by Annie Besant. The college celebrated Hindu holidays. Games and athletics were encouraged, including swimming lessons in the Ganga. It had large playing fields and a gymnasium. The students had an organization called the Vidyarthi Sahayak Sabha that raised funds to help the poor students in their studies. There were several Boy Scout troops organized in the College.[25] When political unrest in India began to affect the students of the College, Besant

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preserving those portions only, which they found consistent with reason [sic]. Dr. Bhagwan Das undertook a task that was different. He interpreted the shastras in their entirety and without changing a sentence or even a word, presented them in their pristine glory, giving a logical explanation of all that which to the scientific mind was incomprehensible.

22 Pushpa Pratap, 'Bhagavan Das (1869–18 Sept. 1958)' unpublished paper.
23 C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, 'One of the Deepest Thinkers of His Times', Messages, *Bharat Ratna Dr Bhagavan Das.*
24 *Benares Hindu University Calendar 1922–25*, pp. 1136–7.
25 Ibid., pp. 1204–7.

organized the 'Sons of India Society', dedicated to inspiring self-discipline and patriotism among her students and the wider population.

The goal of the Hindu College was to offer a truly national education for Hindus, one that taught Indian history, culture, and philosophy, along with western education. The Central Hindu College, while affiliated to the University of Allahabad, did not accept government funding and was largely free of government control. Annie Besant, though at that time was not against the British government, wanted the Hindus to receive a dignified place within that government. Such notables as the Maharaja of Banaras supported the College, though some Hindus suspected that Besant was using the College to spread Theosophy. The efforts at the College gained the attention of those who were concerned with the lack of religious education in the country, including Pandit Malaviya.

PANDIT MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA

Like Besant, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, was an avid supporter of western education who believed that it was essential that Indian learning and religious guidance should complement British higher education. Also like Besant, Pandit Malaviya believed that Hindu youth were in need of training in self-discipline and patriotism. Pandit Malaviya's first achievement in the field of education was to establish a Hindu boarding house at Muir Central College in 1901 for students studying for exams at his alma mater, Allahabad University. The Pandit was convinced that Hindu students needed a residential educational environment where Hindu ideas and culture would mould their character.

Pandit Malaviya was one of the well-known advocates of Hindu interests of his time. He was a small, soft-spoken man of delicate features, clad always in an elegant, long silk tunic, and wearing a turban, was known for his orthodoxy. Unlike many reformers, Pandit Malaviya believed in the efficacy of rituals and practised image worship without apology. He was fastidious in his adherence to caste food customs, keeping his own cow to ensure purity of the milk and refusing to eat food cooked by non-Brahmans. While he was English-educated, and intensely engaged with political and social ideas originating in the West, he never acquired the habit of wearing English attire and avoided English ways in his personal life.

Madan Mohan was born in Allahabad on 25 December 1861, the son of Brij Nath Malaviya, an orthodox Brahman *vyas* who recited the

Bhagavata Purana at religious gatherings. He made his living solely from the offerings he received for his recitations. Though he learned Sanskrit from his father, Madan Mohan, along with his brothers, represented the first generation of Indians who did not automatically take up their father's traditional priestly occupation. Madan Mohan received an English education at Muir Central College from 1879 to 1883, and obtained a BA in 1884 from Calcutta University, the affiliating university for the College. Pandit Malaviya returned to the College to study MA in Sanskrit, but the illness of his father forced him to give up his studies and take employment as an English teacher at the Government High School.

The education and career path chosen by Pandit Malaviya reflected changes in the political and social structures of the United Provinces. The city of Allahabad, Pandit Malaviya's home, assumed political importance in 1858, when after the Mutiny, the city became the seat of the newly constituted North Western Provinces. In 1866, the High Court of the North Western Provinces was established at Allahabad, creating a need for English-educated employees, which led to the establishment of Muir College in 1872 and Allahabad University in 1887. After 1869, the coming of the East India Railways expanded communication with other administrative centres of India.

British administration and presence brought about significant changes in Allahabad.[26] The opportunity, though limited, offered by new professions, law courts, schools, and colleges produced a growing number of English-educated intelligentsia. The newly-educated class was both self-aware and articulate, forming many associations and initiating numerous petitions. Much of their activity was centred on improving the economic status of Indians. It was inevitable that there would be deep resentment at the lack of employment opportunities in administration. Higher administrative posts continued to remain out of the reach of Indians. Reaction against colonial prejudice and exploitative economic policies led to an effort on the part of Indians to create 'a new self-awareness and confidence in the culture and capability of the people of Hindustan.'[27] Out of this context, a movement arose to strengthen Hindu ethnic and religious identity. Historian Vasudha Dalmia suggests that there was a financial motivation in the promotion of Hindu causes. Dalmia explains that it was largely people from the merchant class, for instance,

26 Dalmia, *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, p. 93.
27 Ibid., p. 93.

who initiated the movement for the recognition of Hindi as the language of the courts. Alongside the movement to promote Hindi, there was a flurry of interest in the vernacular press, making Allahabad and Banaras the joint centres of the Hindi movement.[28] Among the developments from which arose the political and social awakening in Allahabad were elements that contributed to the growth of nationalism: volunteer associations, the development of the vernacular press, the growth of group consciousness, and the creation of a public sphere.

Pandit Malaviya, as one of the new generation of English-educated young men of Allahabad, was involved with many of the Hindu causes, including the development of the vernacular press. In 1887, Pandit Malaviya resigned from the Government School at the invitation of Raja Rampal Singh to take up the position of editor of a new Hindi journal *Hindustan*. He remained editor until 1889, when he began his studies for LLB at Muir College. On a part-time basis, Pandit Malaviya helped Ajudhia Nath to publish the *Indian Union,* which had been started by Aditya Ram Bhattacharya, a nationalist and one of Pandit Malaviya's professors at Muir College. Both the journals, the *Hindustan* and the *Indian Union,* represented nationalist opinion in Allahabad and were opposed by the Anglo-Indian publication, the *Pioneer.* Pandit Malaviya himself started two Hindi weeklies, *Abhyudaya* in 1907, and *Maryada* in 1910, and in 1909 participated with Motilal Nehru in the creation of the influential *Leader.* Pandit Malaviya, through the use of the press, contributed to the awakening of a national consciousness.[29]

28 Ibid., p. 94

29 In a press-clipping of the *Hindustan Times* of 24 December 1961 in the P. K. Malaviya Papers in the National Archives of India, an article entitled 'Pandit Malaviya's Role in the Indian Renaissance' details Malaviya's participation in the development of the vernacular press:

> Pandit Malaviya helped in the recovery of the Indian mind and the formation of national opinion by his very long association with several Indian newspapers, published in English, but also (inevitably) in Hindi, which was gaining fast the status of the recognized vehicle of common public thought in Upper India. Among others, he edited 'The Hindustani,' the 'Sanatana Dharm,' the 'Indian Union' and the 'Abhyudaya.' The 'Leader' of Allahabad was founded by him in 1910, and in 1924 he helped to put the 'Hindustan Times' of New Delhi on a solid foundation. In the Imperial Legislative Council in 1910 he therefore opposed strenuously and with telling first hand knowledge Sir Herbert Risley's Bill to provide for the better control of the Indian Press.

In addition to his work with the vernacular press and due to the influence of Aditya Ram Bhattacharya, Pandit Malaviya became associated with the Madhya Hindu Samaj, which Bhattacharya helped to found in 1880. The Hindu Samaj was the first modern political organization in Allahabad and was involved in promoting Hindi and the protection of the cow. Pandit Malaviya was also involved in the creation of the *Hindi Uddharini Sabha* (Society for the Resuscitation of Hindi), which was considered the cultural branch of the Madhya Hindu Samaj. In keeping with the aim of the group, Pandit Malaviya became a trustee of the Bharati Bhavan Library, the only library in Allahabad providing Hindi and Sanskrit books. Pandit Malaviya's work in the *Hindi Uddharini Sabha* included writing of the *Hindi Memorandum*, a petition for the substitution of Hindi in Devanagari script for Urdu in Persian script in the law courts and revenue records. The petition was published in Allahabad in 1898 under the name *Court Character and Primary Education in the North-West Provinces and Oudh*. As a result of these efforts to promote Hindi, the Lieutenant Governor Sir Anthony Macdonnell in 1900 approved a resolution permitting the Nagari script to be used in addition to Urdu and English in court documents. Pandit Malaviya's work in relation to various Hindu causes did much to cultivate a sense of nationalism and contributed to the success of the Congress in north India.[30]

Pandit Malaviya was involved in the activities of the Congress from its early days. In 1886, he was one of seven delegates from Allahabad at the second annual session of Congress held at Calcutta under the chairmanship of Dadabhai Naoroji. At the session, Surendra Nath Banerji made a resolution for admission of people's representatives to the Legislative Councils. A number of speeches were made in support of the resolution. According to a report on the session by A. O. Hume, founding father of the Indian National Congress, the first speech of twenty-six-year old Pandit Malaviya, still a lowly teacher in the Government High School of Allahabad, was the most notable:

But perhaps the speech that was most enthusiastically received was one made by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, a high caste Brahmin whose fair complex-

30 Francis Robinson in *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces Muslims 1860–1923* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 116, writes:

> . . . the actual organisers of the Congress in Allahabad, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Charu Chandra Mitter and their circle, were closely involved with Hindu politics; while in 1888 and 1889 agents of cow-protection leagues toured the east of the province, campaigning not only for the end of cow slaughter but also for Congress and for Council Reform.

ion and delicately chiseled features, instinct with intellectuality, one once impressed every eye, and who suddenly jumping up on a chair beside the president, poured forth a manifestly impromptu speech with an energy and eloquence that carried everything before him.[31]

Pandit Malaviya's speech and presence impressed many, and won him a place in the public eye. At the 1887 session of Congress held in Madras, Pandit Malaviya was again a delegate. That year the Madhya Hindu Samaj elected him as a delegate. In 1885, on the eve of the first session of Congress and in the wake of riots between Hindus and Muslims, the Samaj was expanded into a provincial organization. The Hindu Samaj sought to unite Hindus of different castes and provinces, to promote education and social reform among them, and to represent the Hindus in the political arena. The Madhya Hindu Samaj was one of the recognized political bodies by which delegates were elected to attend Congress. As the delegate of the Samaj, Pandit Malaviya once again exhibited his eloquence on the subject of representative government. The following is an extract from his speech:

Gentlemen, the whole of Europe, without exception has declared that the most efficient and best form of government for any country which has made any advance in civilization is a Government conducted not solely by the few for the many, but to a greater or less extent by the many for themselves—a government in fact, in which the representatives of the people have some potential share and if this be expedient for the European countries, where the rulers and the ruled are of the same nationality, and where they are of the same religion, I think it must be conceded that it is even more essential for India, which is inhabited by people whose habits, manners, customs, language, race and creed differ from those of their rulers. If we demand for India that there should be representatives of her people in the State Councils, we only ask for what, not simply Europe, but America, Australia, and almost the whole civilised world have declared with one unanimous voice to be essential for any Government that is to be suitable to any country, as it is only where the representatives of the people are allowed to take part in the administration, that the wants and wishes, the aspirations and grievances of the people can be adequately set forth, properly understood, or duly provided for. . . . This is now the third time that we have thus been meeting at yearly intervals, we have come from every district, from the most distant portions of this Empire, and in many cases, at the cost of great personal sacrifice. We have nothing personally to gain, no selfish aim to serve. We come together, chosen by our fellow-countrymen, primarily to press upon Government

31 Bhai Parmanand, *Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya*, Vol. 1 (Banaras: BHU, 1985), p. 64.

the fact that the country stands badly in need of this reform, and that the entire Nation prays for it. But unhappily, Government has not as yet listened to our people's prayer.[32]

Again Hume praised the speech of Pandit Malaviya, writing that it was the only speech during the whole session to which even hostile critics could not take offence. Hume had almost the whole speech reproduced and 3000 copies distributed in England. Pandit Malaviya was appointed as the joint secretary of the provincial branch of Congress, then known as the Northwestern Provinces and Oudh Association. He was also elected to the newly formed Rules Committee of the Congress.

For the 1888 session of Congress, Pandit Malaviya invited the Congress to meet at Allahabad. At the time, the young pandit was not numbered among the prominent citizens of the city, but, nevertheless, they supported his initiative. Growing apprehensions regarding the Congress in the minds of the British officials and Muslims (organized by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan) led to a redoubled effort by Congress workers to increase delegates which included a fatwa obtained by leaders of Sunni Muslims of Lucknow in support of the Congress. Over twelve hundred delegates attended the Allahabad session, more than twice the number of the previous year. Two hundred and twenty-three of those delegates were Muslims. Attending the session with the delegates from Bihar was Sachchidanand Sinha, a student of Patna College. He was present when Pandit Malaviya presented a resolution for raising the lower limit of annual taxable income from Rs 500 rupees to Rs 1000. As reported in Pandit Malaviya's biography, Bhai Parmanand's *Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya*, the student, Sachchidanand Sinha, later wrote that unlike other speeches at the session, 'Pandit Malaviya's speeches seemed to me to combine rare eloquence with remarkable sweetness and suavity.'[33] The meeting of the Indian National Congress at Allahabad in 1888 and again in 1892 focused attention on the city as a centre of nationalism and on Pandit Malaviya as a dominant figure.

Pandit Malaviya's public life thus began in the midst of the Congress. He quickly gained a reputation for his eloquent speeches. The Pandit had an excellent command of both English and Hindi. His speeches were concerned with the rights of Indians as British citizens. He closely followed all the moves of the Government of India and relentlessly called upon the higher principles of liberal government. He did not employ

32 Ibid., p. 65–6.
33 Parmanand, *Mahamana*, Vol. 1, p. 73.

religious themes in his speeches, choosing instead to present reasoned arguments based upon liberal principles. Pandit Malaviya, who strongly espoused Hindu traditions, also held a strong belief in democracy. A man who found his own strength and identity in Hindu sanatana dharma, he envisioned a democratic India deriving its character from the sustaining traditions of the Indian people.

Pandit Malaviya believed that through legislative means and strengthening of India as a nation, self-government would be gained. In Congress, he was regarded as a moderate. While Pandit Malaviya involved himself in working for legislative reform, he saw his task as a nationalist to be primarily that of strengthening the status of Hindus. As a Hindu, an orthodox Brahman, he believed it was his dharma (duty) to see first to the needs of his own community. The actions of Pandit Malaviya were often seen as being antagonistic to the Muslim community.

There were numerous complaints made against Pandit Malaviya for his strong advocacy of Hindu rights. Under the banner of nationalism, the Congress, while nurturing support by appealing to Hindu sentiments, maintained that it was strictly a secular organization dedicated to promoting the interests of Hindus and Muslims alike. Pandit Malaviya, while being a member of the Congress, did not disguise the fact that he would be hard pressed to compromise the needs and rights of the Hindu community. He came into opposition with Muslims on many issues: cow protection, the rights of Hindus to hold religious processions in front of mosques, the right for Hindus to reconvert Muslims, the right of Hindus to organize for their own defence, and the controversy over equitable political representation for Muslims.[34] The periodicals of the United Provinces contained many accusations against the anti-Muslim tactics of Pandit Malaviya written by both Muslims and Hindus. Members of Congress, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, who believed in a strict secularism, blamed Pandit Malaviya for hurting the Hindu–Muslim unity, and thereby hurting the nationalist movement.[35]

34 Pandey, *Ascendency of the Congress*, pp. 118–19.

35 After the Hindu Mahasabha introduced the *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movements in 1923, the United Provinces periodicals contained many complaints by the Muslims against Pandit Malaviya. *Notes on the Press, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh,* reported, for example, in No. 19, 19 May 1923 that 'The *Naved* remarks holds that Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and other prominent Hindu leaders ought not to have excited the Hindus to hate the Muhammadans' and in No. 27, 14 July 1923 reported, 'The *Naved* describes Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya as an enemy of Hindu-Muslim unity and accused him of impeding the progress of liberty.'

Pandit Malaviya was particularly known for his participation in the Hindu Mahasabha, an organization dedicated to protecting Hindu political interests. Pandit Malaviya, in spite of his fierce devotion to Hindu issues, firmly believed in secular nationalism that also included Muslims. When the leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha began to preach that India was the true home of only Hindus and that there should be a Hindu nation, Pandit Malaviya withdrew from participation in the group. Apparently he recognized the limit where promoting the interests of his community crossed over into an overt denial of the rights of the other community.

The commentary about Pandit Malaviya by the Muslim community was not solidly negative. At times, newspaper articles about Pandit Malaviya written by Muslims were favourable.[36] Mohammad Ali Jinnah had a cordial relationship with the Brahman pandit. A fellow resident of Allahabad, the Urdu poet Akbar Allahabadi, who was very conservative in his Muslim views, was also his admirer.[37] Pandit Malaviya was also invited to attend conferences on Muslim–Hindu unity by the Muslims.

Francis Robinson, in *Separatism Among Indian Muslims*, p. 250, quotes Jawaharlal Nehru describing the work of Pandit Malaviya against extended communal representation:

> As soon as the municipalities bill was passed, a massive agitation was launched by the Hindu right. . . . It was led by bigoted Brahmins from Allahabad, Chintamani and Madan Mohan Malaviya, who whipped up support through the columns of the *Leader* through the paper's network of correspondents and by appeals to narrow prejudice against Muhammadans.'

36 Among the positive comments made by Muslims concerning Pandit Malaviya, the following issues of *Notes on the Press, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* provide the following summaries:

No. 26, 7 July 1923, reported that the Muslim publication, the *Quam*, 'resents the hostile attitude of the Musalmans towards Pandit Malaviya and remarks that the Musalmans are jealous of his eminent position and do not like that the Hindus should be guided by such a firm-minded leader.'

No. 45, 12 November 1932 reported that the *Oudh Akhbar* appreciated the 'unceasing efforts of Maulana Shaukat Ali and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya towards communal settlement.'

No. 22, 3 June 1933 reported that the *Medina* (Bijnore), expressed that 'In fact there can be nothing more degrading and shameful for a Government than that a respectable man should bring serious charges against its officials and it should not have the courage to institute an independent inquiry regarding those accusations. . . . We are of the opinion that Mr. Malaviya's challenge has brought the Government to its wit's end.'

37 In a press-clipping from December 1961, in the P. K. Malaviya papers at the National Archives of India, an article by Bal Krishna Rao, 'Malaviya's Inspired Orthodoxy', compared Pandit Malaviya with Allahabadi:

Believing that observance of religious duties provided the foundation for a peaceful and well-functioning society, Pandit Malaviya wanted to see India guided by the religious principles of both Muslims and Hindus. Pandit Malaviya believed that under colonial rule, many Indians remained uneducated concerning the highest attainments of their own culture and that religious practice was subsequently declining in the face of the dominance of western patterns of living. The challenge for Pandit Malaviya was to create an authentic Indian nationalism, based on the religions and cultures of India. At the Punjab Hindu Sammelan in 1923, Pandit Malaviya said that only a religiously oriented society would unite Indians as a nation and allow them to make progress. In order to achieve unity, Muslim and Hindu communities alike needed to be more religious.[38] Strong in their religion, unified by a new awareness of their own national identity, and equipped with modern knowledge, Indians would be prepared to assume responsibility for their nation. For this end, Pandit Malaviya envisioned the founding of a Hindu university.

The idea for the creation of BHU was part of a wider historical development of the reform and revival of Hinduism. Under colonialism, western religion and culture threatened to eclipse Indian traditions, beliefs, and lifestyles. British administrators and missionaries often described Hinduism as a degenerate, heathen religion, and Hindus as a weak people. The revivalists inspired Hindus to take pride in their religion and culture. Education, used as a tool of colonialism and Christian proselytization, became a tool of Hindu reform and revival. In the late nineteenth century, the Arya Samaj established the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic schools and colleges, which emphasized and reformed Hindu culture. Annie Besant established a school for the uplift of Hindus through education in both western and traditional subjects. Pandit Malaviya grew up in the context of a rising self-confidence and sense of identity among the Hindus of the United Provinces due to changes in social and eco-

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His orthodoxy and conservatism were comparable to those of his illustrious contempory and admirer, Akbar Allahabadi. That remarkable poet was as staunch a believer in orthodox manners and customs and as sincere a Muslim as Malaviya was a staunch Hindu and a firm believer in preserving intact the integrity of the community's cultural heritage. Neither Malaviya nor Akbar Allahabadi could reconcile himself to the idea of culture existing without drawing sustenance from religion. Indeed it would be more correct to say that for both these great Allahabadis culture was nothing if not rooted in religious conviction.'

38 Madan Mohan Malaviya, 'Punjab Hindu Sammelan, Lahore, 23 Feb. 1924', in *Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya*, Vol.1, Sitaram Chaturvedi, ed., (Banaras: Sitaram Chaturvedi, 1936), p. 119.

nomic circumstances. He believed that religious education was necessary for the formation of character in the Indian youth and that the acquisition of western knowledge would allow the Indians to take charge of their national affairs.

Pandit Malaviya took the position that Hindus and Muslims in India should have their own institutions of higher education in order that both could receive the benefit of religious training in their own faith. Pandit Malaviya, who was fastidious in his religious observance, embraced the western institution of the university, proposing an altered form of western higher education that would serve to bring about an uplift of the Hindus of India. The following chapter documents the rejection of Annie Besant's call for a national university for all faiths, and the subsequent campaigns for separate Hindu and Muslim universities.

CHAPTER TWO

A Leap in the Dark: The Chartering of Hindu and Muslim Universities

Annie Besant and Pandit Malaviya were well aware of the importance of higher education in national dignity and power. In the heyday of nation building, universities and nationalism had a symbiotic relationship. The development of schools and universities reflected the growth of nationalism in a country. Schools and universities, in turn, nurtured nationalist sentiment.[1] The role of higher education in fostering Indian nationalism, though, was truncated in British India where universities were established as tools of colonial rule. The Macaulay Minute of 1835, produced by the Committee of Public Instruction in Bengal, set the agenda for education in India. An English educational system in India would, according to Thomas Babington Macaulay, the president of the committee, create 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.'[2] The idea was that an English education would serve to break down the peculiarities of region, language, caste, and religion and create an integrated loyal and competent citizenry for the British Empire. Western education was conducted in English and based upon the curricula of British schools and colleges. This policy ensured that traditional Indian sciences, literature, history, as well as religion would be neglected. The British defended their policy of secular education with the argument that as India was a land of many religions, the introduction of the teaching of any particular religion in the universities would be a cause of contention. After the revolt of 1857, the British acknowledged that interfering in societal norms did little toward ensuring a stable citizenry. Therefore, unlike English universities,

1 Eric Hobsbawn, *Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (New York: Mentor, 1964), p. 166.
2 Thomas Babington Macaulay, as cited by H. Sharp, ed., in *Selections from the Educational Records, Part 1, 1781–1839* (Calcutta: Government of India, 1920), p. 116.

Indian universities would of necessity be without religion. Neither the tenets of Christianity, nor the traditions of Hinduism would be taught. The Government of India, though, in 1915 reversed its policy and granted permission for the establishment of Banaras Hindu University, followed soon thereafter by the establishment of Aligarh Muslim University in 1920. The British officials involved in the chartering and funding of BHU were not simply giving in to public demands for a national education that included Indian learning and traditions, though such demands were indeed being made. They were of the opinion that Hinduism taught at BHU, by promoting respect for law and order and loyalty to the British throne, would offset a growing trend towards seditious activity among the educated youth of India. The British were joined in their hopes for BHU by the loyalist Indian princes, who saw in orthodox Hinduism, a justification for their roles in Indian society, roles that were being challenged by new ideas of socialism and democracy. In championing the cause of BHU, the British officials and princes hoped to win the favour of the Hindu leaders of India, who would shepherd the masses into the loyalist fold. With the institution of BHU, the educational policy of the Government of India would still hold; the University would produce educated and obedient servants of the Raj. The University would nurture long-neglected Hindu traditions and knowledge, as well as train young men and women in western knowledge, in order to create national pride and good citizenship in the British Indian Empire.

The founding of BHU in 1915 marked the first sanctioning of a religious university by the Government of India. The Banaras Hindu University Act (Act XVI of 1915), approved in the Imperial Legislative Council, stipulated that provision would be made for religious instruction and examination in the Hindu religion only and that religious instruction and examination would be compulsory for all Hindu students. Prior to the creation of BHU, there had been no residential or teaching universities, and as a matter of policy, no examinations in religious subjects. While students of Indian universities prepared for examination along the lines of those of universities in England, the universities in India were strictly examining bodies. Unlike at the British universities, there was no student life, no hostels, no playing fields, and no boys' choirs. There were no university cathedrals, no compulsory chapel attendance, and there were no examinations in theology. At BHU, it was hoped that residential education under the guidance of pious and learned Hindus would mould the character of the students just as the character of English youth was moulded at Oxford and Cambridge. Religious classes,

prayers, celebration of Hindu festivals, and especially interaction with the best and most noble of Hindu nationalist leaders, would serve to nurture religious sentiments in students, sentiments that included respect for tradition, for established social order, and for the ruling authorities. Western education would prepare students to take not only subordinate positions in the British government, but to engage in business, arts, and professional occupations.

Earlier, in the Punjab, Sikh reformers won the support of the British in establishing a college that would offer western education while at the same time nurture the Sikh faith. A few of the Sikh leaders involved in the establishment of the college suggested that the institution be named Lyall Khalsa College in honour of Sir James Broadwood Lyall, Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, who had rendered in assistance in garnering government support. Lyall refused the name and in 1892 laid the foundation stone for the Khalsa College in Amritsar. Many Sikhs dedicated a tenth of their income to the institution. Sikh rulers also contributed generously. While the British retained some control, Khalsa College became the central institution for the Sikhs of India. The Sikhs wanted their youth to be provided western education in order to progress. At the same time, they wanted to retain their identity and nurture a revival of Sikh religion through education and literature.[3]

Prominent supporters of Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College and later Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) held similar hopes for the education of Muslim youth. The development of the Muslim centre of higher education in the United Provinces was closely related to the creation of BHU. To understand fully the movement for a Hindu university, the ideas and events surrounding the educational movement of Aligarh, the beginning of which predated the campaign for the Hindu university, should be taken into consideration.

DEVELOPMENT OF A THEOLOGY OF WESTERN EDUCATION AND COLLABORATION AT ALIGARH

As supporters of BHU sought to revitalize Hindu culture and unite the Hindus of India in a single political block, similarly, issues of dignity and political power in the colonial context surrounded the development

3 Kashmir Singh, 'Sikh Education, Khalsa College and the British', in J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, eds., *The Khalsa over Three Hundred Years* (Delhi: Tulika, 1999), pp. 151–2.

of AMU. Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of MAO College and the inspiration behind AMU, sought to uplift the status of Indian Muslims while offering an interpretation of Islam which supported western education and Muslim collaboration with the British. The charter and support of AMU by the British were granted on the basis of commitment by Syed Ahmed's heirs at Aligarh to a paradigm of Muslim education that promoted loyalty to the Raj.

As emphasized above, the Hindus working for the establishment of BHU sought to remedy the position of inferiority imposed by both the colonial situation and the perceived decline of their own culture, while at the same time remaining loyal to the British government. The Indian Muslims, particularly the upper classes, the *sharif*, were also conscious of British prejudices against the Muslims and the political vulnerability of the Muslim community in the post-1857 years of British rule, particularly as a religious minority in light of the predicted move towards some measure of representational government in India. The Muslims had suffered a great decline in status with the establishment of the British administration in India. After centuries of association with the Mughal courts, this class found itself excluded from positions of power in the country. The British and the Europeans, while formally giving Indian Muslims regard for past achievements in India, looked on the political capabilities of Muslims as a dangerous threat after the revolt of 1857. Islam as a religion and Muslims as a people were subjected to much the same ridicule as Hindus. Islam was considered a distant and primitive relative of Christianity as a monotheistic religion, but the accusation directed at Muslims in India concerned the mixing of Islam with the superstitions of Hinduism. Western visitors to India often wrote of examples of this degenerate association with heathenism. The biases against Muslims seeped into the official mindset of British administration. Resistance to the cultural prejudices of the ruling powers, which manifested itself in reform movements to strengthen the position of Muslims, was vital to the development of nationalism among the Muslims of the subcontinent. Education of the young was an essential element in this reform. In the United Provinces, the establishment of MAO College, and its expansion into AMU, brought about a shift in Muslim attitudes toward western education and cooperation with the Government of India. Syed Ahmad Khan, the chief proponent of this change, provided the initial inspiration for development of a Muslim university.

Syed Ahmad Khan, as a judge in the subordinate judicial administration of the North Western Provinces, worked for the restoration of Mus-

lim dignity within the British Empire. He believed that Islam had been wrongfully defamed as a backward religion and foresaw the day when Muslims would gain the esteem of the British and, along with the British, take their rightful place at the helm of the Government of India. But Syed Ahmad's vision was only one of many among Indian Muslims. Some considered his acceptance of the Englishmen as 'People of the Book', as true allies of Islam as heresy. Muslim reactions to the colonial situation in India varied.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Muslims of the subcontinent, while sharing a condition of subjugation, did not constitute a single united body. Islam was much more of a homogeneous religion than Hinduism since all Muslims held a common belief in Allah and Muhammad as his prophet, but nevertheless differences existed among Muslims in India with regard to region, class, lineage, religious authority, and the interpretation of Islam. There were Shia and Sunni Muslims and followers of various schools of thought within these two divisions of Islam; there were aristocratic Muslims, descendants of the rulers and administrators of the Mughal Empire, and there were extremely poor agriculturalists and Muslims of every shade in-between. Often Muslims had more in common with Hindus of similar occupation and social standing than they had with Muslims from drastically different backgrounds. Having few common interests between them, the Muslims of India did not have a common approach to the issues confronting them under British domination.

After the suppression of the revolt and the brutal crushing of Muslims in north India by the British, there was a concern about the loss of status and power of the elites. By the end of the nineteenth century, various Muslim groups in the United Provinces held differing ideological approaches as to how the plight of Muslims could be remedied.[4] The Barelwis, in an alliance with hereditary pirs of the countryside, looked to Muslim orthodoxy. The Deobandis, Ahl-i-Hadith, and the founders of the Nadwah Dar al-Ulum, attempted to counteract the loss of political power by moulding an Islamic community that maintained its influence through an appeal to the individual conscience, rather than to political control. They looked at the ulama, the religious leaders, as the natural leaders of the Muslims. In contrast, Syed Ahmad wanted to see the emergence of a bureaucratic and administrative elite who would rule India in cooperation with the British. As the education required for employment

4 Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements*, pp. 82–3.

in the British administration was one that reflected western values and culture, Syed Ahmad believed that the proper course of education for the upper class Muslims was western education.

Syed Ahmad Khan believed that for Muslims to improve their degraded status under colonialism, the Muslim community to be transformed into a vital force within the British Empire, there had to be a theology that situated them in the modern context. If Muslims saw their destiny as partners with the British in India, if they had faith that it was Allah's will that they achieve a dominant place in the secular administration of India, they could be made to accept western education as a tool for their success. But faith was the force through which deeds were done, and a theology that gave authority to the Muslims to function in the modern context was missing. Syed Ahmad Khan provided this theology in his teaching that western education did not contradict faith in Islam. On the contrary, it was the duty of Muslims under the law of God to take their place at the helm of worldly learning. Syed Ahmad undertook the writing of a new commentary on the Qur'an that supported this position, the only one that he felt was viable for Muslims if they were to rise from their inferior status under British rule. Though the commentary was widely rejected by Muslims, Syed Ahmad continued his efforts to modernize Islam by introducing western education to his community.

In June 1875, Syed Ahmad Khan opened the first Muslim institution of higher education dedicated to western education. The MAO College, also called the Madrasat ul-ulum Musalmanan, was founded in Aligarh, about eighty miles from Delhi. Initially, many Muslims in India were strongly opposed to Syed Ahmad's plans for the college and few Muslims were interested in sending their sons to Aligarh. For his efforts, many Muslims condemned Syed Ahmad to the extent that fatwas of *kufr* (declarations of infidelity to the faith) were issued against him from Mecca. Orthodox members of the community ostracized Syed Ahmad for his promulgation of western education and for his association with the British. Many condemned Syed Ahmad as an unbeliever.[5]

There was also tension within the College, as disagreements arose over administration and curriculum.[6] Various factions developed among the alumni of the College. But the factions served to enhance the image of Aligarh as a centre of Muslim national politics. Political movements

5 Shyam Krishna Bhatnagar, *History of M.A.O. College Aligarh* (Aligarh: Asia Publishing House, 1969) p. 6.

6 Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements*, pp. 68–9.

that sprang from cliques and personal rivalries of the College spread from Aligarh to other areas of the country. MAO leaders mobilized different constituencies, but 'always in the name of Aligarh and in terms of the shared assumption that the category "Indian Muslim" represented a permanent party interest in national politics.'[7] The MAO alumni, never a unified force, nonetheless spread the fame and influence of the College throughout India.

Slowly the validity of the College came to be accepted by more Muslims. The growing success of Syed Ahmad's educational efforts at MAO College among the Muslims was reported by the Education Commission of 1882:

> Recognizing the backwardness of their community in Education certain Musalman gentlemen of these provinces were determined to discover the remedy; and led by Maulvi Sayyad Ahmad Khan, whose life has been one of long devotion to the cause of liberal education, they formed themselves into a society with the primary purpose of ascertaining the specific objections felt by the Musalman community towards the education offered by Government and of ascertaining the kind of education which would be welcomed in its place. It was plain to them that a return to the old methods of Oriental instruction was impossible. Much as they might venerate the traditions of their forefathers and prize the treasures of a copious and elegant literature, the society held that the only education which could bring their race into harmony with the civilization around them and so restore it to a position of influence was an education frankly acknowledging the advance of science, catholic in its sympathies with all that was admirable in the literature, history and philosophy of other countries, broad in its outlines and exact in its studies. At first though, as might be expected, this very liberality was the danger that threatened the undertaking. To appeal to the Musalman community at large upon principles so much at variance, not with the Muhammadan religion, but as interpreted by the majority of those who held it, was to stir up antagonism. Well aware of this, the society yet hoped for ultimate triumph. For some time the support they obtained was grudging. Slowly, the opposition slackened in the face of persistent courage of the yet small band of followers.[8]

As acceptance of Syed Ahmad's ideas grew, fatwas were issued, but they were now in his support. Maulana Shah Sulaiman Chishti of Ajmer issued a fatwa declaring that any contributions made to Syed Ahmad's

7 David Lelyveld, ' "Three Aligarh Students," Aftab Ahmad Khan, Ziauddin Ahmad and Muhammad Ali', *Modern Asian Studies,* 9 (1975), pp.103–16.

8 Cited in Safi Ahmad Kakorwi, ed., *Morison's History of the M.A.O. College, Aligarh*, (Lucknow: Markaz-e-Adab-e-Urdu, 1988), pp.17ff.

Muslim College would be considered as meritorious as offerings for Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti. They would be considered as gifts to the faith. In the years after 1886, it became apparent that public opinion amongst the Muslims had turned in favour of Syed Ahmad Khan and Aligarh College.

Some political causes which were at work at the time also helped to bring about this support. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was established. The INC, which had attracted the membership of the Muslims, called for the introduction of representational government in India. In December 1887, Syed Ahmad Khan delivered an address attacking the INC. In response, Muslims as a body left the Congress and aligned themselves against representational politics. The Muslims continued to meet once a year like their political opponents in the INC, but their sole purpose was to inquire into the social and educational situation of their fellow Muslims in India. The occasion for their yearly meeting was the Muhammadan Education Conference, which was founded by Syed Ahmad Khan in 1886.[9] This movement, which served to alienate the Muslims from their fellow Hindus in INC, was also the springboard for the founding of the Muslim League in 1906, which functioned initially as an appendage of the Education Conference. Members of the Conference, influenced by Syed Ahmad, considered alliance with the British to be in their best interest. Agitation during the same period between Hindus and Muslims over the question of the slaughter of cows also moved the Muslim community closer to the British. These combined events resulted in growing acceptance of the British and western education among the Muslims. As Syed Ahmad's MAO College gained the support of many Muslims, the College came to be regarded as the beginning of an intellectual renaissance among Indian Muslims during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Aligarh College was affiliated with Calcutta University in 1878. While the College included an Oriental department, and the general scheme of the College provided an Islamic environment, the curriculum of the College was determined by the standard requirements of the university's examinations. Aligarh students had to study the same books as the students of other colleges. Islamic theology was taught, but given low priority at Aligarh. The examinations were easy and did not require much study on the part of students. Owing to his radical ideas of religious reform, Syed Ahmad agreed to have nothing to do with religious in-

9 Ibid., p. 23.

struction at Aligarh nor would he involve himself in the lives of the students. Men of known orthodoxy were put in charge of theological education. No controversial points of doctrine were included in the course on theology, and the books that were chosen contained only those religious teachings which were accepted by most of the Indian Muslims.[10] Debates, which were very popular at the College, were not allowed to cover religious topics, except when they related to non-Muslims subjects.[11] In spite of being a Christian, Theodore Beck, the first principal of the College, supported the effort to ground the students in Islamic values. An emphasis, however, was laid upon developing camaraderie among the boys through campus life and not upon Islamic theology. The goal of the College, which ultimately corresponded to Syed Ahmad's goal of the institution, was to produce graduates who would be proper young gentlemen according to both *sharif* and English standards. Group activities, moral guidance by teachers, and close supervision of students in the residential setting were to shape the students into a common mould. Upon his departure, the second principal of MAO College, Theodore Morison, praised the students of the College for both their loyalty to the Crown, and for their other traditions, which he summarized as the 'manliness, honour and self-reliance of the Aligarh boy.'[12]

CAMPAIGNS FOR THE UNIVERSITIES

The campaigns for Aligarh Muslim University and Banaras Hindu University developed alongside each other in the first decades of the century in a spirit of cordial, though sometimes, outright competition.[13] The progress and setbacks suffered by the campaigns were in response to the political changes in the country at the time. The introduction of representational government and communal electorates, the onset of radical politics of the nationalist movement, disagreements between campaign participants, and government concern with controlling a growing seditious tendency among students were all the factors which played into the sporadic

10 David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 133.
11 Ibid., p. 222.
12 Kakorwi, ed., *Morison's History of the M.A.O.*, p. 104.
13 For details of the campaigns, see Gail Minault and David Lelyveld 'Campaign for a Muslim University, 1898–1920', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1974), pp. 145–89, and Jurgen Lütt, 'The Movement for the Foundation of the Benares Hindu University', *German Scholars on India*, pp. 160–95.

pace of campaigns for Hindu and Muslim universities. These political elements, which had little to do with the education to be received in the institutions, were behind the race for the universities, and the timing of their actual creation. While BHU was the first to be established, the campaign for AMU pre-empted the efforts at Banaras.

Syed Ahmad Khan had originally envisioned the expansion of MAO College into a Muslim university. But it was not until the end of the nineteenth century, after Aligarh had gained fame as the educational centre of Indian Muslims that movement for the establishment of a Muslim university was begun in earnest. The campaign began in 1898, in the wake of the death of Syed Ahmad Khan amid financial problems at Aligarh College and a struggle for control of the College among the heirs of Syed Ahmad.[14] The Sir Syed Memorial Fund was established for the purpose of creating the university. Donations from the Muslim communities of India were slow to come, in part due to the struggle for control of the administration of Aligarh College. Samiullah Khan, a co-founder of the College, who developed an enmity for Syed Ahmad, led one faction vying for control. Samiullah wanted to remove British influence from the College. The British government officials, in order to counteract the influence of Samiullah, offered to provide aid to the campaign for the Muslim University if the College regulations were amended in such a way to guarantee administrative stability and a measure of government supervision. On 31 January 1899, the College trustees agreed to the conditions.

With the support of the Government of India, acceptance for the University among the Muslims began to grow, but there was not a consensus as to what shape the University should take. As in the case of BHU, the supporters of AMU had various intentions. The British officials involved in the chartering of the University would naturally desire a university which catered to the needs of the empire, one which would prepare young Muslims for service in the Raj and encourage loyalty to British rule. There were Muslim supporters of the University who, in the footsteps of Syed Ahmad, saw the destiny of the Indian Muslim community closely related to the prosperity of the British Empire and promoted the development of such a Muslim institution. In 1898, for instance, Maulvi Rafiuddin Ahmad published an article in *The Nineteenth Century* explaining that the British would strengthen their rule by helping to create the University for all the Muslims of the British empire, which would be organized along the lines of Oxford and Cambridge and dedicated to

14 Minault and Lelyveld, 'The Campaign for a Muslim University', pp. 146f.

'loyalty to British rule'.[15] There would undoubtedly be benefits for the Muslim community. Theodore Beck, the British Principal of Aligarh College, pointed out at the Educational Conference of 1898 that the University would be the Indian Muslim's passport to office. The Muslim University, in providing a western education to Muslim youth, would help level the playing field in the competition for employment in the government offices. Ziauddin Ahmad, a member of the Aligarh faculty, argued that the University would allow Indian Muslims to compete successfully with other Indians and win political leadership. But there were other supporters of the Muslim University who were firmly against any British control of the University and insisted that the power to affiliate other colleges was necessary if the University were to reach Muslims all over India.

The proposal for a Muslim university as a network of affiliated colleges, according to Minault and Lelyveld, 'implied the development of an autonomous system of education cutting across the system established by the British'.[16] One of the chief proponents of an affiliating Muslim university under Muslim control was Mohamed Ali. Born in 1878, Mohamed and his older brothers Shaukat Ali and Zulfiqar Ali were alumni of Aligarh College.[17] At the 1904 meeting of the Muhammadan

15 Rafiuddin Ahmad, 'The Proposed Muslim University in India', *The Nineteenth Century*, XLIV (1898), pp. 915–21, cited by Gail Minault and David Lelyveld in 'Campaign for a Muslim University', pp. 148–9.

16 Minault and Lelyveld, 'Campaign for a Muslim University', p. 115.

17 After graduating from the MAO College, Mohamed Ali went to England to attend Oxford. He failed Indian Civil Service exam and returned to Aligarh to try to secure a teaching position. Unsuccessful, he had to take up government employment in Baroda. Nevertheless, Mohamed and his brother Shaukat were leaders of one of the factions at Aligarh, continuing their involvement with Aligarh. From its beginning in 1906, Mohamed was active in the Muslim League. In 1911, Mohamed and Shaukat both left government jobs to work for the establishment of the University. During the period of World War I, the Ali Brothers became involved in the Khilafat Movement in sympathy with the Caliphate of the Ottoman Empire and for the protection of the holy places of Islam in the Middle East. The Brothers gave up western suits and took to wearing long robes. The other Aligarh alumni shunned the Ali Brothers as being extremists and a discredit to Aligarh. The British government interned the Brothers for their anti-imperialist efforts. In 1920, after being released from prison, Mahomed Ali returned to Aligarh with Mahatma Gandhi. They demanded that the College forsake its ties with the British and become a nationalist institution. For more information on the careers of the Ali Brothers, see Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982).

Educational Conference, Mohamed Ali delivered an impressive speech in support of the foundation of an affiliating Muslim university. The speech helped to bring Mohamed into prominence as a public figure. Mohamed Ali, one of the 'first born' of MAO College, fully supported Aligarh as the centre of Muslim learning, but he held ideas that were very different from Syed Ahmed's. The latter had blamed the decline of Muslims on a lack of modern knowledge. Mohamed Ali, on the other hand, believed the falling away from faith had resulted in the degradation of the Muslims in India. He wrote: 'Only when our wars, and politics, and domestic life were divorced from our faith did we decline, and now that the cup of our misery is full to the brim, it is because our religion has little or no real hold upon our lives and actions.'[18] Mohamed Ali held that religious faith was the mark of a people, a banner under which they could walk with confidence. He called for the strengthening of faith among the Muslims and believed that revival and reform of Islam was necessary if Muslims were again to rise in the world. Hope for change lay in educating the youth in the fundamentals of their religion. Mohamed was aware of attempts made in secular western schools to provide a non-sectarian religious education based upon teachings derived from a distillation of ethical and moral teachings of all religions. But Mohamed Ali, who held that such attempts to unify the diverse religious communities in India by imparting universal religious values created from a synthesis of different religions were futile, considered this effort grossly inadequate. Religious values, separated and held aloof from their sources, lacked power:

> Religious development for large masses is not possible unless men are educated in some particular faith, the faith that they believe in above all others . . . . The fact is, that the intensity of belief which makes religion a living force in our lives is possible only when we muster under the banner of some one faith or other, and consider that banner and that faith peculiarly ours.[19]

Mohamed Ali believed that Muslims in India, existing in a state of degradation under colonialism, were in need of the banner of their own distinctive religion.

The youth, Mohamed Ali believed, were in vital need of moral and ethical training, which only a religious education could give them. It

18 Mohamed Ali, 'The Proposed Muhammadan University' in Khaliq Ahmad Nizami's *History of the Aligarh Muslim University (1920–1945)*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat, 1995), p. 275.

19 Ibid., p. 276.

was recognized that under the secular Government of India and in a pluralistic country, such education was impossible to provide in 'mixed' institutions, which provided education to Indian students from various faiths. As Mohamed Ali pointed out, attempts to teach values under such conditions, under the auspices of non-sectarianism, produced weak results:

> Education on more latitudinous lines has so far failed to teach men anything more than hazy generalizations about the supernatural which will not satisfy the yearnings of the finite for the infinite, and vague general principles which will not supply the need of stringent well-defined code of morals ready for use in all emergencies.[20]

Education of the youth in the teachings of Islam had been an important goal of the Muslim communities of India. Islamic schools and colleges existed wherever there was a flourishing Muslim community. Traditional Islamic education in the Qur'an, Arabic and Persian, and the theology of various schools of thought were transmitted in those schools, but western education was absent. Without education, Muslims could not participate on an equal footing with either the British, or the Hindus of India in the British Empire. The solution was to provide a Muslim university, which had the power to decide the curriculum of its various colleges.

A specifically Muslim university could offer both a strong education in Islam and in western subjects. Mohamed Ali believed that the Hindus of India also needed their own university, where Hindu religion would influence the students and where Hindu history and culture would be supported within the context of a western education. For India to return to greatness, both Hindus and Muslims had to take up the construction of knowledge of their culture and history without relying on transfusions of knowledge from western sources. The problem of western domination of eastern subjects could not be solved by the establishment of new colleges, which offered courses in Oriental learning, as the colleges were all under the influence of British universities to which they were affiliated. Mohamed Ali argued that previous attempts to introduce traditional learning in colleges in India had proved dismal. The remedy for the inadequacy of the study of Oriental subjects was the foundation of a university, in fact two universities, one Hindu and the other Muslim:

20 Nizami, *History of AMU*, p. 276.

Benares, too, would provide like Aligarh a characteristic course of studies for the Hindus, and there would thus grow up two great centres of literary activity, each with its own traditions, and memories, and dreams. Not like to like, but like in difference.[21]

The Muslim University, according to Mohamed Ali, would stand along with the Hindu University, not in antagonism, but in common endeavour.

In his ideas for the Muslim University, Mohamed Ali was building upon the foundation of Syed Ahmed's ideas on the appropriateness and necessity of western education as a field of study for Indian Muslims. But Mohamed Ali was also expressing ideas that stood in contrast to the ideas of Syed Ahmad. Syed Ahmad Khan's ideas developed in the aftermath of annexation of Avadh and the Revolt. His ideas were in response to his own experience of the brutal retaliation of the British in putting down the rebellion and in obliterating political influence of Muslims in north India. The kingdom of Avadh had been taken from Wajid Ali's hands. Bahadur Shah II, the reluctant symbol of Mughal rule behind whom the rebels had rallied, had died shortly after being exiled to Burma. The British murdered his sons, the last of the Mughal dynasty, as well as multitudes of other suspected Muslim participants in the Revolt. The full power of the British fell upon India and there was no hope of resisting. British imperialism was the reality of the day, a reality that had to be faced on its own terms.

Syed Ahmad Khan founded MAO College for the benefit of a specific segment of the Muslim population of India, the nobles, in the hope that western education would equip them to serve in the British administration. The Muslim college would provide the upper echelon of Muslims with the western education required for service in the British administration. The students were primarily from elite backgrounds. It was Syed Ahmad's hope that the elite graduates would one day be in positions of power in the British government, a government which he likened to the Mughal rule. He did not envision a representative government. His ideas did not centre on the nation-state. Syed Ahmad Khan laid emphasis on the *qaum*, on the restoration of the *sharif* classes as a community. The MAO College focused on nurturing the qaum within the College. The common life of Aligarh boys, it was hoped, would foster a lasting camaraderie among the graduates, who shared the common bond of belonging to the Muslim upper classes. Islamic theology, a cause of contention

21 Ibid., p. 266

among believers, was fairly neglected. In trying to create a common sphere, Syed Ahmad Khan himself, knowing his religious ideas were radical, voluntarily kept away from the students. It was not a common religious outlook, but a common westernized sharif culture that Sir Syed wished to produce.

Mohamed Ali's ideas of central place of religion in the life of Muslims and Hindus arose in response to a changing situation in India. With the rise of the INC in 1885 and the growing demand for representation in the legislative councils, Mohamed Ali was attuned to a different time than Syed Ahmad Khan. The vision of the day was the nation-state. Mohamed Ali envisioned that the Muslim University would serve and unite Muslims, not just sharifs, but also all Muslims of the subcontinent.[22] Mohamed Ali shifted the emphasis from a restoration of the powerful sharif to a revival of Islam, a transformed and unitary Islam. He looked for the day when all Muslims would study theology from a single textbook instead from Sunni and Shia textbooks. The idea of a unitary religion and a united Muslim population reflected the move towards representational government and nationalism. As Gail Minault and David Lelyveld have argued, Mohamed Ali believed that Hindus and Muslims could live together amicably only if they were allowed to cultivate their distinctive cultural traditions within a 'federation of religions'.[23]

MOVEMENT FOR THE CREATION OF THE HINDU UNIVERSITY

In 1904, soon after an enthusiastic discussion of the proposals for a Muslim university at the Muhammadan Education Conference, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, a prominent member of the All-India Congress Party and member of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces, proposed the establishment of a residential Hindu university which would instruct students in both Indian and western knowledge. At the INC session of 1904, held in Banaras, Pandit Malaviya's proposal for the Hindu University was unanimously accepted. Aga Khan sent a message to the INC session, voicing his support of the Hindu University and promising a donation of five thousand rupees as a token of that support.[24]

22 Minault and Lelyveld, 'Campaign for a Muslim University', p. 173.
23 Ibid., p. 157.
24 Ibid., p. 139.

This INC meeting was notable as it was followed by the partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon, who divided Bengal according to religion and adopted repressive measures. Before this meeting, the INC was united in its faith in British justice, but with the events following the partition of Bengal, resentment against the government began to grow. Differences arose among the INC members, which soon led to a split between radicals and moderates, as to how best to influence the government. The partition of Bengal was also followed by a Muslim demand in 1906, led by Aga Khan, for separate political representation, and a promise from Viceroy Lord Minto of separate electorates and weighted representation for Muslims. The same year saw the establishment of the self-professedly 'communal' All-India Muslim League.[25] The following year, the Hindu Mahasabha was created.[26] Various political activities and his own law practice took Pandit Malaviya's attention momentarily away from active promotion of the University.

In 1907, with Pandit Malaviya involved in starting his weekly Hindi journal, *Abhyudaya*, in support of moderate politics, Annie Besant presented a petition to the Government of India for the creation of a university with the power to affiliate colleges of all denominations, both Hindu and Muslim, throughout the country. It would be named 'The University of India'. While Besant had been very supportive of Hindu culture and religion, her larger vision, based on Theosophical ideas, was uniting Indians of all faiths in the British Empire. Besant attempted to involve the Muslims of Aligarh College in her plans for the Indian university, but they refused to participate, choosing instead to promote the estab-

25 Medhi Ali (Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk) and Mushtaq Hussain (Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk) drafted the constitution of the Muslim League. The League was supported by Sultan Muhammad Shah, the Aga Khan, the religious leader of the Khoja community who had led a Muslim deputation to the Viceroy only three months earlier asking for weighted representation in favour of Muslims for their past contributions to the country. Before 1912, the Muslim League's chief aim was the institution of separate electorates for Muslims, opposition against the Congress and its platform of *swaraj* and boycott, support the partition of Bengal and the Morley-Minto Reforms, and extend employment of Muslims in the higher ranks of government service.

26 The first Hindu Sabha was started in the Punjab in 1907 soon after the Land Legislation of 1906. The Punjab had been a Muslim-majority province in which the minority Hindus held a monopoly of the economic interests. The Land Legislation put the dominant minority community is a less advantageous position. It was worsened under the Morley-Minto Reforms which extended to the Muslims a statutory majority in the province. The leadership of Punjab Hindu Sabha organized the first All-India Hindu Mahasabha in 1915 at Haridwar.

lishment of a Muslim university. In 1910, when Annie Besant was attempting to garner support for her scheme of an All-India University, she wrote to Nawab Viqarul Mulk, one of the orthodox Muslims who gave his support to Aligarh College, seeking his help in establishing a university for all the faiths of India. Viqarul Mulk replied that Muslims had 'special educational needs' which could only be fulfilled through a Muslim university.[27]

The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 encouraged the separatism of the Aligarh Muslims. As historian Ayesha Jalal writes:

> The reforms institutionalized what until then had been a dominant colonial perception of the importance of religious divisions in Indian society by granting Muslims separate electorates in representative bodies at all levels of the electoral system. A momentous step, it gave Muslims the status of an all-India political category but one effectively consigned to being a perpetual minority in any scheme of constitutional reforms.[28]

The reforms were met with much consternation on the part of Pandit Malaviya, who was made President of the INC of that year, as well as member of the Legislative Council of India. While the INC remained neutral towards the introduction of separate electorates, Pandit Malaviya was convinced that they would exacerbate differences between Hindus and Muslims and would spell ruin for the country:

> For the sake of nation, I am absolutely against communal representation. But unless the Muslims are willing to give it up voluntarily, neither are we ready to give up this claim. Seeing such enmity being created by communal representation, I feel sad. Nationalist government and communal representation cannot go together. Today communalism is affecting the common people. If it remains so strong then it will not be profitable or useful to form a true national government.[29]

Pandit Malaviya criticized the Muslim League for its embrace of communal electorates.[30]

In the wake of the reforms, the support of separatist politics by the Muslim League gave renewed vigour to the campaign for a Muslim university. In 1910, Aga Khan himself set out on a tour of the country to

27 Cited in Nizami's *History of AMU (1920–1945)* Vol. 1, p. 51.

28 Ayesha Jalal, 'Exploding Communalism,' in Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal (eds), *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: The State and Politics in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 89.

29 Madan Mohan Malaviya, cited by Sitaram Chaturvedi in *Mahamana*, p. 124.

30 Ibid.

raise funds. When it finally began to appear that the Muslims were to have their university, Pandit Malaviya engaged himself once again on behalf of the Hindu University. Aga Khan's efforts however cooled within two years. After 1911, the annulment of the partition of Bengal, the crisis in the Balkans, and the desecration of the Kanpur mosque in 1913 turned the upper and middle class Muslims against the separatist and loyalist politics of the Muslim League, and toward consideration of a joint Hindu–Muslim nationalist front. The Muslims were disappointed over the refusal of the Government of India to grant the power of affiliation to the proposed university. The Muslim League changed course and aligned itself with Congress in the nationalist movement. Muslim dissatisfaction with the government manifested itself in protests by the students of Aligarh, consequently the Government of India refused to proceed with the proposal of Aligarh Muslim University. Supporters of a united nationalist front, Shaukat Ali and Mohamed Ali, Aligarh graduates and influential alumnae in College affairs, suggested alternate plans for the funds raised for Muslim university if the government did not grant affiliation and full Muslim control. The trustees of Aligarh College and a number of Aligarh graduates, however, were in favour of accepting government terms. Aga Khan resigned from the Muslim League and in 1914 threatened to withdraw his donation and support of the institution if the members of the Muslim University Association did not cooperate with the government. The disagreement between the members of the association hindered progress.

The Government of India, on its part, was committed to secular education and did not hurry towards acceptance of the proposals for Hindu and Muslim higher educational institutions, which they regarded as faith-based and sectarian. The government was awakened slowly to the demand for religious education by public sentiment that decried the lack of religion in higher education for the youth of the country who were turning aside from traditional religion and morals. In the scheme of Macaulay, who had fathered the policies of Indian education, this was precisely the goal of a good education. Macaulay boasted, 'No Hindu who has received an English education ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence.'[31] On the contrary, many Indians, after nearly half a century of secular education, blamed the lack of religious educa-

31 Thomas Babington Macaulay, cited in Anderson's, *Imagined Communities*, p. 91.

tion in the country for drunkenness, moral turpitude, lack of good citizenship, and even seditious tendencies among the educated youth of India. Efforts were made in non-governmental institutions to make religious instruction an integral part of education.

Colleges such as Annie Besant's Central Hindu College, the Arya Samaj College, the Khalsa College of the Sikhs, and the Aligarh Muslim College were all part of a general movement by Indians to create an education that would reflect their heritage. Harcourt Butler warned the Government of India against the rise of 'sectarian' schools, which were not under the control of the government.[32] Butler also warned that the government should not oppose higher education, but instead should use a little generosity in providing for higher education to promote the public good and to keep the universities under firm control. He wrote, 'The importance of putting our universities on right lines can be hardly over-stated; for unquestionably the Universities will become in India, as elsewhere, centres of national life and nurseries for national feelings.'[33] Butler took the position that the Government of India, as a true national government, should take the lead in the educational movement. Butler wrote to Aga Khan, who was one of the proponents of the establishment of AMU, that he wanted to see the British government in India as a truly national government, constantly keeping abreast of Indian opinion and leading national movements. 'For this,' Butler wrote, 'it is necessary that the government should lead the educational movement.'[34]

Butler, responding to calls for religious education and convinced that religious education would serve the purposes of the Government of India, became the leading British advocate for the creation of AMU and BHU, both located in the United Provinces. It was Harcourt Butler who introduced the bill for the chartering of BHU in the Imperial Legislative Council. But there were others who strongly disagreed with instituting religious education. The press reported Harcourt Butler's admission of opposition in the Council that in some quarters it has been considered that government was taking 'a grave risk, graver than any government ought to face.'[35] Nevertheless, Butler did not share this view. Further in

32 Harcourt Butler. Secret, 13 May 1911, p. 26, India Office Library, MSS.EUR.F. 116/68.

33 Ibid.

34 Butler to Aga Khan, 3 August 1911, India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR.F.116/71, pp. 7–8.

35 Butler in his speech introducing the Hindu University Bill as cited in *The Panjabee*, 7 March 1915, India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS. EUR.F.116/70.

his speech supporting the Hindu University Bill, Butler had described to the Council certain safety checks, which had been included in the University Bill in case anything went wrong and intervention was required. Butler explained to the Council that they should trust the Indians in this matter and intervene only if things go wrong:

> We preferred to trust society, to leave them large autonomy, and to reserve to Government only the necessary powers of intervention if things go wrong. I hope that things will not go wrong. But you will not misunderstand me when I say that taking these powers is a necessary precaution. You will also realize that to some extent this is *a leap in the dark* and that the machinery which is being provided is very complicated and might in conceivable circumstances produce friction. I hope that intervention will not be required.[36]

Though Butler was supporting the Hindu University Bill, he was criticized in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta for referring to creation of the university as 'a leap in the dark':

> What a disillusionment! The University then, is not an innocent seat of learning as fools think but a machine which is not only 'dark' as Erebus but which might any moment go wrong! And we have it in another place from the same honorable gentleman, that by sanctioning the scheme the Government has run a risk.[37]

Butler, as we shall see, believed that the risk was worth taking. Arguing that educating the youth in India in the Hindu religion would inspire loyalty to the government and would serve to quell growing sedition in India, Butler convinced the Legislative Council to pass the University Bill.

In 1909, while the plans for BHU were still being negotiated, Viceroy Minto sent out a letter to the Indian princes warning them about growing sedition against the Government of India. Twenty-two ruling princes wrote back, promising to help the British suppress sedition. The princes acknowledged that their own interests were intimately connected with the stability of the British Raj. The Nizam of Hyderabad replied to Lord Minto's request for the princes to take a firm hand against sedition in their states: 'I quite agree with your excellency in thinking that these doctrines are subversive of internal peace and good government, and the matter is one in which the interests of the Government of India and the

36 Ibid.

37 *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 29 March 1915, India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR.F.116/70.

Indian princes are identical.'[38] The princes, as collaborators with Empire, had a stake in helping to maintain the power of the Raj.

Several princes wrote to Lord Minto suggesting that religious education that imparted traditional Hindu ideas would serve to rescue the educated youth of India from the designs of the seditious. The Maharaja of Alwar wrote to the Viceroy that as long as the education of the country was based on the principles of the Hindu religion, which included loyal attachment to the throne and subordination to law, the British Empire would have a great future.[39] The princes subscribed to an interpretation of Hinduism that would legitimate their own roles in the British Raj, as well as deter modern ideas of social equality that were taking root in the Indian states and threatening the regal position of the princes. As a proclamation by the Raja of Gwalior illustrates, an attempt was made to convince the masses that modern ideas of democracy were not needed and that the role of the raja, the ruling prince, was grounded in ancient Hindu polity:

> Democracy to us in India is not a new-fangled idea. We find it embedded in our ancient heritage. The very basis of our village life is based on autonomy. The village *panchayats* are the very fabric in which the pattern of our Hindu polity was interwoven. To the best of my beliefs as your Ruler, I have been able to accomplish a little for your welfare since I succeeded my revered father. But if modern conceptions require changes in the system, actuated as I am with the idea of working for the happiness of my people, I shall not be found wanting in accommodating myself to the changing times if that be the desire of my people. But I should only wish that the turn which the future structure of our political edifice should take shall be at least based on the sound foundations which our forefathers had so wisely laid in building up their village society.[40]

38 Nizam of Hyderabad to Lord Minto, India Office Library, MSS.EUR.F.116/66, A 2, p. 17.

39 Maharaja of Alwar, in a speech on 26 October 1909, said, 'So long as the education that is to govern the children of this country is based on life-giving and man-making principles. . . . I don't think the well-wishers of this great Indian Empire need to be over-anxious about its peaceful and brilliant future. I always take delight in ascribing the notions of loyal attachment to the throne and love and peace and subordination to law among the great masses of the Hindus to the teaching they have received through the old schools and through their own societies regarding these noble principles of our religion.' Letters printed in the *Gazette of India*, 22 Jan. 1910, Calcutta, Foreign Department, India Office Library, Butler Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR.F.116/66.

40 From Proclamation issued by the Raja of Gwalior, 13 Feb. 1939, India Office Library, L/P&S/13/1452, Confidential, Gwalior Residency. D.O. No. 38-P, p.7.

The princes claimed that *varnashramadharma*, the 'traditional pattern of religious duties as expressed in the caste system'[41] relegated to them a traditional and important role in society, that of the raja.

In order to promote their vision of a perceived traditional social order which legitimized their ruling positions, several princes took leading roles in the Hindu revivalist organization, the Bharat Dharm Mahamandal, in which Pandit Malaviya also participated. The Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, an organization of aristocrats, priests, landlords, princes, and merchants, held that if every Hindu would adhere to varnashramadharma, then Hinduism would again flourish as it had prior to the arrival of Islam.[42] While other Hindu organizations existed that were against the British government, the Mahamandal was supportive of the Raj as stated by the organization in the tumultous year of 1919:

> We believe in *karma*. We believe in pre-ordination, the previous arranging of events to come by the All-Wise with a view to the good of the humanity. Being Hindus how can we doubt that the British have been sent to rule over us by God of our fathers for saving our race from the degradation and disintegration with which be were threatened. The establishment of British rule in India is not only a miracle but the most appropriate thing in the world.[43]

The British had little concern about the involvement of the princes in such movements. Secure in their confidence that the princes were solidly behind them, they felt they could benefit from the princes' influence on the Hindu population. As James Meston, the Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces from 1912 to 1918, wrote of the Maharaja of Banaras, 'He is a good little man, in spite of his shyness, and wholeheartedly with us, while his strict orthodoxy and high position in the Hindu world make him a social power of much greater magnitude than the dimensions of his small State would suggest.'[44]

In 1909, representatives of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal wrote to Viceroy Minto expressing their loyalty to the Government of India and stressing the need for religious education. Among the signers of the Mahamandal document were several princes who became major donors

41 Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements*, p. 79.
42 Ibid., p. 84.
43 Report of 1919, Circular No. 205, Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, Varanasi, cited Krishna Singh, 'Cultural History of Varanasi in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,' (PhD Thesis, Banaras Hindu University, 1990), p. 122.
44 Meston to Chelmsford, 4 Sept. 1916, India Office Library, MSS.EUR.F.136/1, p. 36.

of BHU, including the Maharaja of Darbhanga, later chosen by Harcourt Butler to raise funds for the establishment of the university. The communication, 'The Orthodox Hindu Deputation', read as follows:

> The orthodox Hindus throughout India are loyal by nature. Loyalty to the throne and to social order is ordained in our Shastras and forms a part of the mental and spiritual outfit we receive in youth. And we take this opportunity of emphasizing our loyalty to the British Government and to express our thankfulness for the entire religious liberty we enjoy under its beneficent rule. We are profoundly thankful for the great interest the Government is taking in the education of the people, but it is our conviction that unless all education is permeated with the religious spirit it will fall short of the ideal which is the goal we aim at in all our work.[45]

Viceroy Minto, abiding by the standing policy of the Government of India that all government-funded education should be strictly secular, did not agree to the Mahamandal's request for religious education. The concession to religious education was to be the contribution upon which Viceroy Hardinge came to pride himself with the establishment of Banaras Hindu University.

Viceroy Minto, though, did voice appreciation for the loyalty of the Orthodox Hindu Deputation, a loyalty that the Viceroy also found expressed in a certain little Hindu textbook:

> The words in which you explain to me that in your loyalty of the British Government you are fulfilling the tenets of your faith have deeply impressed me . . . . Loyalty is, I know, the teaching of your Shastras. In a little Hindu text-book which was lately shown to me I find it laid down that Reverence to the Sovereign, the head of State, comes naturally after reverence to God, the representative of whose power, justice and protection he is on earth, if he be a true king, intent of the welfare of his subjects—and here our respective religions meet on common ground, for the Christian scriptures tell us, too, to fear God and honour the King.[46]

Significantly, the little Hindu textbook that taught loyalty to the British throne as a Hindu virtue was written by Annie Besant for use at the Central Hindu College.

Pandit Malaviya greatly benefited from the work of Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das at the Central Hindu College. The Hindu College

45 Excerpt from the Hindu Deputation, 8 March 1909, India Office Library, Morley Collection, MSS.EUR.D.573/14.

46 Excerpt from Viceroy Minto's speech in reply to Orthodox Hindu Deputation, 12 March 1908, India Office Library, Morley Collection, MSS. EUR.D.573/14.

was originally under a Board of Trustees, of which Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das were members. But in 1911, due to lack of interest among Muslims in a national university, and failure to generate sufficient funds, Annie Besant and the Board of Trustees of the Hindu College agreed to transfer the college to the Hindu University Society, the society Pandit Malaviya had founded for the creation of his proposed university. Besant's Central Hindu College would become the core of the proposed Hindu university.

Pandit Malaviya, meanwhile, as secretary of the Hindu University Association, had continued the difficult and protracted negotiations with the Government of India for the establishment of the Hindu University, and in his haste to see his dream come to fruition, had agreed to government terms. After ten years, the Government of India reversed its policy of secular education in chartering the Hindu University. The dramatic change in policy was only partly due to persistence on the part of the members of the university associations. The government officials, under the leadership of the Member for Education in the Government of India, Harcourt Butler, came to have their own designs for the universities as a deterrent against sedition.

In 1915, when the establishment of BHU was being debated in the Central Legislature, a member, referring to the clauses relating to religious instruction, jesting asked, 'What is Hinduism; what Hinduism are you going to teach?' The spokesman for the Banaras Hindu University Act, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, replied authoritatively, 'There is no room for question as to what Hinduism we are going to teach; we have been teaching Hinduism through these textbooks.'[47] The textbooks to which Pandit Malaviya referred were the *Sanatana Dharma* series written by Annie Besant of the Theosophical Society. These were the same little Hindu textbooks that Viceroy Minto had found to support loyalty to British rule. Besant had published a series of textbooks in 1903 that included the *Sanatana Dharma Catechism*, *Sanatana Dharma: An Elementary Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics*, and *An Advanced Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics*. Annie Besant intended that the catechism and elementary textbook should be used in primary and secondary education and the advanced textbook should be used for college instruction. The 'little Hindu textbooks' proved to be very popular and were widely read in India. Within three years of its publication 130,000

47 Madan Mohan Malaviya as cited by Besant in *Sanatana Dharma*, pp. xvii ff.

copies of the elementary textbook in English and several vernaculars had been distributed throughout India.[48] The Hindu textbooks were used for religious instruction in the Central Hindu College. Bhagavan Das, a fellow Theosophist and close associate of Annie Besant and co-founder of the college, contributed a chapter to the *Elementary Textbook*. In 1914 and 1915 copies of Annie Besant's textbooks were published for use in BHU.

Annie Besant's little textbooks on Hindu religion gave deference to both the Hindu social order and to the ruling powers of the British throne. In her textbooks, Besant writes that Hindu society is founded upon and governed by the laws of *dharmashastra*, the first and chief being the *Manusmriti*. The priority given to the *Manusmriti* by Besant was in keeping with the attention the text received in the nineteenth century as a result of various publications of Orientalist translations of the text into English. But while Besant's textbooks taught adherence to the traditional Brahmanical social order of varnashramadharma, they taught that varnas were determined by behaviour, not birth.[49] There were Hindus who found this idea grossly in error, believing that duties regarding ritual purity were ascribed by birth and could not be changed according to one's personal volition. In theory, though, many Hindus at the time, including Mahatma Gandhi and members of the Hindu Mahasabha, along with Pandit Malaviya, were professing that varna could be determined by a person's behaviour and ritual purity. This more inclusive position, voiced in Annie Besant's textbooks, provided a ground for the acceptance of Untouchables into the Hindu fold. The re-interpretation of the Sanskrit texts also secured a place for the British rulers of the Hindus. While the raja of the *Manusmriti* had little in common with the head of a nation-state, Annie Besant provided a remarkable enhancement of Manu's discussion of the duties of a raja. Loyalty to the raja was expanded to mean loyalty to the British Crown and to the nation:

> *Loyalty* to the Head of State is equally insisted on in the Sastras . . . . *Patriotism*, the love of one's country, and *Public Spirit*, caring for the nation more than oneself, are virtues that are so closely akin to loyalty that they should never be separated from it. King and country are the object of true loyalty.[50]

48 Ibid., p. xviii.

49 Besant, *Elementary Textbook*, p. 118; Besant argues that a fixed caste system was the chief cause of the instability of Indian society in *Ancient Ideals in Modern Life*, 2nd ed. (Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925), p. 67.

50 Ibid., pp. 190–1.

In her introduction, Besant expressed the hope that her book would contribute both to uniting Hindus and creating a national religion.[51] According to Besant's books, the national religion would be a Hinduism that promoted loyalty to the British government.

It might appear odd that a textbook produced by Annie Besant found favour with the British authorities in light of the fact that Besant helped initiate the Home Rule Movement and was interned for sedition. But in 1903, when Annie Besant first published her textbooks, she was not involved actively in the politics of the subcontinent and had not yet gained a seditious reputation among the British. Besant's initial work to promote Hinduism grew from her belief in the teachings of Theosophy, which included a vision of a place for India in the divine destiny of the British Empire. Besant wrote that she and the other founders of the Central Hindu College attempted to encourage service to the country and loyalty to the British:

> I took part with other enthusiasts in founding, in 1898, the Central Hindu College and school in Benares, and we carried it on—giving an Education religious, intellectual, moral, and physical (fourfold, as stated above), teaching loyalty to the Sovereign hand in hand with service to the country—until 1914.[52]

Annie Besant admitted that she was not popular with the British in India, but it was because of her unconventional and close association with Hindus, not because of any active seditious activity on her part.[53] She even had friends among the British officials. When she first made public grievances against government officials for ill-treatment of her students in 1910, Viceroy Minto defended her. She began to move towards political activism after the incident, but it was not until 1916, after the foundation of BHU and the selection of her little loyalist Hindu textbooks by Pandit Malaviya, that Besant came into full confrontation with the British government with her scheme of Home Rule.

The British officials who presided over the foundation of the University, Viceroy Hardinge and Harcourt Butler, the Member for Education

51 Besant, *Advanced Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics*, p. 9.

52 Besant, *The Future of Indian Politics*, (Banaras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1940), p. 32.

53 Ibid., p. 36, Besant wrote:

> 'I was very unpopular with the British in India, partly because I loved Hinduism and fought against missionary efforts to pervert Hindus, especially schoolboys, and partly because I lived among Hindus as one of themselves, sharing in the family life and observing their customs. For a white woman "to degrade herself" to be walking and driving with Hindus, was anathema.'

in the Government of India, while suspicious of Besant, also did not entirely trust the chief supporter of the University, Pandit Malaviya. 'The silver-tongued orator' as he was often called, was considered one of the foremost leaders of the Indian National Congress. He was also widely esteemed by the Hindu community. Though Butler admitted to liking Pandit Malaviya personally, he believed him to be unreliable.[54] Sir James Meston, Lieutenant Governor in the United Provinces, wrote of the Pandit in 1917:

> Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya is the ablest man in the whole party. He never rests, his personal character is above reproach, he had consequently much more greater influence with the Hindu masses than any other of the other leaders, and he has an unrivaled genius for organizing agitation. In this he is ably assisted by a group of brahman politicians with its focus at Allahabad.[55]

Though Malaviya was a moderate constitutionalist, Meston did not trust him because of his nationalist leanings. Meston believed that the dividing line between moderates and extremists was a very fine one. He wrote, 'But whether these men are Anarchists, Extremists, or Moderates, they want to paralyze the Executive. One uses bombs, the other sedition, the third veiled sedition under the garb of *constitutional agitation*.'[56] British officials believed that they could not afford to place any but proven loyalists at the helm of affairs at the University. To this end, Hardinge and Butler had for both symbolic and pragmatic purposes, enlisted the Indian princes in the funding and administration of BHU.

Butler sought the services of the Maharaja of Darbhanga as the chief fund-raiser for the University among the princes. As historian Jurgen Lütt writes, Darbhanga had the qualifications for making sure the University was kept in the right hands.[57] He had the support of the landed aristocracy, a class considered as thoroughly loyal by the government and could win the princes' support for the University. Darbhanga wrote to Butler of his assigned task, 'This is a most wearisome and uphill business, but after you put me to the wheel last year there is no going back and I hope you will see me through.'[58] As the Maharaja went about

54 Butler to Reading, 21 July 1921, India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR.F.116/57, p. 8.
55 Meston to Chelmsford, 20 August 1917, India Office Library, MSS.EUR.F.136/3.
56 James Meston to R. H. Craddock, Home Department, 5 January 1913, Indian Office Library, MSS.Eur. F.136/15.
57 Lütt, 'The Movement for the Hindu University', p. 176.
58 Darbhanga to Butler, 15 June 1912, India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR. F.116/69.

garnering financial support for the creation of the University, he promoted the idea that religious education at BHU would serve to quell sedition. At a public meeting in support of the University, Darbhanga told his audience that true education should not stop with intellectual and physical training, but should extend to the spiritual. Education should not only prepare the boys for careers, but it should enable them to gain mastery of their lower natures and equip them for a higher life. Darbhanga reasoned, 'Anarchy and sedition can find no place in a society where education is regulated on such principles'.[59]

Twenty-five ruling princes, including the maharajas of Udaipur, Jodhpur, Jaipur, Alwar, Mysore, and Scindia of Gwalior, with the encouragement of the Maharaja of Darbhanga, Harcourt Butler, and Pandit Malaviya, made major contributions to BHU. They all became members of the ruling Court of BHU. The same twenty ruling princes had written to Lord Minto in 1909 promising to help quell sedition. It was the suggestion of some of the princes that education in Hindu religion could be used as an instrument against sedition and lawlessness. The princes were to play a double role in the University. As Indian rulers, they imparted to the University its Hindu and national appearance; as major donors, they would have the power to ensure that the University would not become an instrument of nationalist sedition against the British. Hardinge, in a letter to Butler, described the intended role of the Indian princes in the administration of BHU, 'The Ruling Chiefs will take very good care that the whole institution is properly conducted and does not become a home for sedition.'[60]

The British approval of a specifically Hindu education at BHU must be viewed in terms of the official aims of the British government. The support of an all-embracing and unifying Hinduism would serve the purposes of the British in their self-appointed task of creating political order amidst the diversity of India. As Robert Frykenberg writes, 'In a continent so highly pluralistic, such a Hinduism helped to reinforce the construction of any single huge overarching political order, an order possessing a single all-embracing ideology or religion.'[61] A university

59 Maharaja Bahadur of Darbhanga, 17 Oct. 1911, at a public meeting in connection with the Hindu University, India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR.F.116/70.

60 Hardinge to Butler, 18 Feb. 1916, India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR.F.116/42.

61 Robert Eric Frykenberg, 'Construction of Hinduism at the Nexus of History and Religion', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Religion*, 23:3 (1993), p. 541.

designed to institutionalize a national religion loyal to the British throne would certainly be an asset to the Government of India. Sir Sundarlal of Allahabad, a loyalist who helped in the creation of BHU as an intermediary between Pandit Malaviya and the government, wrote to Harcourt Butler of the advantage in having a unified religion, which he saw evidenced in the progress of Burma, which had a single religion:

> I see the outlines of the Burma University and an expanded Council for Burma in the near distance, and the Burmese system of education rapidly expanding with a homogenous and one-religioned community without prejudice of caste or its social trammels, the country will make rapid progress, indeed much more rapid than we can ever expect to make.[62]

Harcourt Butler, when introducing the Banaras Hindu University Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council of 22 March 1915, defended the introduction of religious instruction in the University. He told the Viceroy, 'I believe, my Lord, instruction in the truths of religions . . . will tend to produce men who, if they are true to their religion, will be true to their God, their king and their country.'[63] Butler believed that the Government of India would not be hindered by a Hindu education that taught loyalty to the government as a Hindu virtue. Significantly, Annie Besant's textbooks were used not only at BHU, but also in colleges in the Indian princely states of Kashmir, Mysore, Baroda, Rajputana, and Hyderabad.[64]

The creation of the Hindu University would also fit perfectly into an overall scheme, drawn up by Harcourt Butler in 1910, for securing India for the Raj. Butler reported the beneficial effects of the Minto-Morley Reforms, which included the increased antagonism between Hindus and Muslims.[65] He pointed out two remaining problems and suggested further actions for the government. Butler listed the beneficial effects of the reforms:

62 Sunderlal to Harcourt Butler, 10 April 1916, India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR.F.116/70.

63 Butler, cited by Dar and Somaskandan, *History of BHU*, p. 282.

64 Jurgen Lütt, *Hindu Nationalisms in Uttar Pradesh, 1867–1900* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1970) p. 164.

65 James Meston, Harcourt Butler's successor in the United Provinces, saw the reforms as successful in destroying the ability of Congress to bring Muslims into their fold, 'The whole scheme of the Hindu politician is to wear down the Muhammadan, to multiply his mistakes, to squeeze him out of public life and thus to bring him into the nationalist fold on Hindu terms. As your Excellency knows, I have no love for separate representation in the abstract. . . but the point that cannot be too strongly emphasized at the moment is that it has upset temporarily at least, the cherished

1. They have checked the predominant influence of the professional politician and the educated class, meaning by the latter the class which has nothing behind it except education.
2. They accentuated the antagonism of creeds and groups, of Hindus and Muhammadans, of the old and new ideas in each community, even in the Arya Samaj, of professional men and the landed aristocracy, of lawyers and men of business.
3. They have drowned nationalism in provincial and local sentiments.[66]

Butler concluded that the above having been accomplished, 'two disquieting factors' needed to be removed. The first was the secret societies with their anarchical intent. The second, according to Butler, was the 'increasing proletariat of semi-educated youth who are without employment.' In order to deal with both of these, Butler suggested that strong administrative and definite educational schemes be allotted funding by the Government of India.

Butler continued in his note to lay out the priorities for governmental policy in light of the reactions to the Minto-Morley Reforms. The agenda he put forward was piecemeal, corresponding to the different situations in the various regions of India:

> In the Deccan and in Southern India, we have to help in breaking the power of the Brahmans. In Bengal we have to watch and (court?) the influence of religious ascetics who by their self-denial and mysticism capture the minds of emotional young Bengalees . . . . In the United Provinces, we have to retain and build up the loyalty of orthodox Hinduism centred at Benares, Ayodya, Allahabad, Muttra, Hardwar. And generally we ought to assist the landowning and agricultural classes to hold their own. We must reward loyalty and make it pay . . . . But we are still the ruling race. Recent discontents and divisions have been an object lesson. We are indispensable to India, and most thinking men in India know it.[67]

The creation of BHU would fit into Butler's scheme. The University would well serve Butler's call for 'definite schemes of education' which would curb seditious tendencies and keep India's 'increasing proletariat

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plans of the orthodox Hindu of advanced ideas.' Meston continued his letter saying that he was now certain that it was impossible now for the Muslim League to join the Congress. James Meston to Chelmsford, 4 September 1916, Indian Office Library, MSS.EUR.F.136/3, p.38.

66 Butler, Note on the Political Outlook in India, 20 April 1910, India Office Library, MSS.EUR.D.573/24.

67 Ibid.

of semi-educated youth' in hand. It would also be the perfect thing to win the loyalty of the orthodox Hindus of the United Provinces. Butler would also accomplish similar goals in the support of AMU. If kept under the control of loyalist Muslims, the Muslim University would also deter sedition and appease Muslim friends of the Raj, such as Aga Khan, who was a major donor and fund-raiser for AMU. In light of Butler's opinion that the Minto-Morley Reforms had been successful in creating antagonism between Muslims and Hindus, perhaps he also thought that the introduction of Hindu and Muslim universities in the United Provinces, if kept under close government supervision, would serve to nurture loyalty to the Raj, and would also strengthen communal allegiances and mutual alienation between Hindus and Muslims.

Questions on the level of government supervision over the universities brought extended delays. The Government of India agreed to allow Hindus and Muslims to control the actual workings of their respective institutions; they could determine the courses of instruction, instruct students in religion, and assume all responsibility for administration of the institutions. But there had to be some manner of government supervision. The government was to have the right to intervene in case of trouble, that is, sedition. There were supporters of the universities who chaffed under the requirement of government supervision. Lord Curzon's Indian Universities Commission of 1902 had set the stage for government opposition to the Hindu and Muslim universities. The Commission called for centralization and increased control over the existing Indian universities.[68] All the five universities confined their activities to examination and affiliation alone, until the passing of the Indian Universities Act of 1904, based on the recommendation of the Commission, which conferred on them wider powers for increasing their efficiency. These included the assumption of teaching functions, the exercise of an effective check over affiliated colleges, and the undertaking of research. None of these universities, however, in fact, exercised the function of teaching, or undertook research, until much later. The Commission reiterated the importance of strictly secular education and was against not only the establishment of Hindu and Muslim universities, but also any universities other than the existing five that served all of India. The Government of India Resolution of 1913, though, urged the creation of teaching and residential universities in each of the provinces. As Member for Education, Harcourt Butler was largely instrumental in persuad-

68 Minault and Lelyveld, 'Campaign for a Muslim University', pp. 153f.

ing Viceroy Hardinge that the generous act of instituting the Hindu University would only serve the purposes of the Government in India in winning the loyalty of the population.[69] Butler and Hardinge took the lead in encouraging and guiding the foundation of the universities according to their own designs. Negotiations took some time, as both Hindus and Muslims were forced to compromise on their original proposals and make concession for the government demands. The Hindu University was required to accept English as the medium of instruction instead of Hindi. Both the Hindus and Muslims wanted power to affiliate colleges from all over India. Without affiliation, it was argued, the institutions would not be able to function as influential all-India institutions. The government, though, firmly denied the Hindu and Muslim universities the power of affiliation. James Meston, Lt. Governor of the United Provinces, believed that the Hindus would complain, but would eventually accept the government terms. Meston, who was never in favour of chartering Hindu and Muslim universities, believed that the government decision against affiliation would mean the end of plans for the Muslim University:

> The Hindus will kick, but will come in; Darbhanga and Malaviya have been talking too big to afford to let the thing drop now . . . . But I think it means the end of the Muhammadan University, and a good thing, too, for money, brains and driving power were all wanting, and we could use every pie of the funds with advantage in improving Aligarh College.[70]

Meston's predictions concerning the Hindus proved correct; they were the first to agree to the conditions set by the British officials. On 1 October 1915, the Banaras Hindu University Bill was passed in the Indian Legislative Council. Later, Lord Hardinge, writing on the brilliant success of the durbar held on the occasion of the opening of BHU, boasted, 'It is very satisfactory to feel that this venture in Indian education, for whose birth you and I are chiefly responsible, has been successfully launched.'[71]

In the Muslim press of the United Provinces, there were accusations of betrayal made against Hindus for accepting the terms without first informing Aligarh, but there were also congratulations given to the Hin-

69 Butler was also the chief advocate of the Aligarh Muslim University, when many in government felt strongly against allowing sectarian education.

70 Meston to R. H. Craddock, Home Department, 2 August 1914, Indian Office Library, MSS.EUR.F.136/3, p. 161.

71 Hardinge to Butler, 18 Feb. 1916, India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR.F.116/42.

dus on the success of their movement. All in all, the passing of the Banaras Hindu University Bill on 1 October 1915 was seen as the death knell to any remaining hope of obtaining an affiliating Muslim university. If the Hindus agreed to the government terms, it would be highly unlikely that the government would ever reconsider the Muslim request. The Muslim university, established on government terms, would be different from the university originally envisioned. Without the power to affiliate regional colleges across India, the Muslim University would be little more than a regional institution, not the independent all-India institution capable of uniting Indian Muslims. Mohamed Ali, the leader of a radical element in the college, now interned by the government, was firmly against compromise; he called for a boycott or even revolution at the College.[72] But other supporters of the University called for acceptance of the government terms. Progress towards the establishment of the Muslim University was delayed by disputes among the opposing factions of the College.

As the negotiations and deliberations concerning the Muslim University continued, the situation in India was rapidly changing. By the time the Muslim University was established, Osmania University had been established in Hyderabad State and plans were being made for universities in Dacca, Lucknow, and Agra, all of which would compete for Muslim patronage and students. The Rowlatt Acts, Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, Home Rule Movement initiated by Annie Besant and Tilak, and Muslim protest, led by Ali Brothers against the British actions in regard to Turkey, had fuelled protest against colonial domination. The influence of moderates in both the Congress and the Muslim League was weakened. In September 1920, the Congress, the League, and the Khilafat Committee of the Ali Brothers, under Gandhi's leadership, voted in favour of non-cooperation with the British government, which included boycott of all educational institutions supported by the government. After being released from prison, Mohamed Ali returned to Aligarh with Mahatma Gandhi in October 1920. The trustees were incensed at their riotous behaviour in holding meetings in the College mosque. In complaint of the behaviour of the nationalists, the trustees wrote, 'They have also utilized the college mosque for political purposes, and by bringing within its sacred enclosure a large number of non-Muslims with their shoes on hurt the religious sentiment of a large number of trust-

72 Ibid., p. 178.

ees.'[73] Mohamed Ali demanded that the College should forsake its ties with the British and become a nationalist institution. Another alumnus of the College, Ziauddin, was principal of the College at the time. He was able to resist the takeover attempt and kept the College from following non-cooperation. Major donors to the College, such as the Nawab of Rampur, were in support of Ziauddin's loyalist position. The Nawab wrote of the activities of Gandhi and Mohamed Ali:

> As a Visitor to the College, I feel it my duty to say that the carrying on of the mischievous propaganda of this nature among the students can do nothing but permanently injure the best interests of the Muslim community and prove ruinous to the College in depriving it of moral and monetary support from the bulk of the community. No sensible Mussalman can calmly view such a prospect and I take this opportunity of declaring myself strongly opposed to the movement.[74]

The trustees of the Aligarh College voted against participation in non-cooperation. They acted in haste to accept the terms of the government for the University. Several government officials had earlier realized that it would be wise to back up the loyal Muslims and facilitate the establishment of the University. While there was room at the College for the trustees to inspire sedition, there would be more control at the University.[75] In response to Gandhi's call for national institutions, Mohamed Ali established the Jamia Millia Islamia in the vicinity of the college as a nationalist alternative to the University, and a number of students left the College to follow him.[76] On 1 December 1920, a month after the secession of the radical element from Aligarh College, the British government passed the Aligarh Muslim University Bill. While the Ali Brothers and Gandhi made a strong effort to take over the new University, AMU held firm in its cooperation with the government. The nationalist institution, Jamia Millia Islamia, was not successful in wooing the students and faculty away from AMU. Of the students who had initially left with Mohamed Ali, many of them returned to AMU. After five years, the Jamia Millia Islamia was moved to New Delhi to serve as a Gandhian educational institution.[77] The Muslim University continued its work under

73 From 'A Resolution of the Trustees', *The Aligarh Institute Gazette of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College*, Wednesday, 3 November 1920.
74 Nawab of Rampur, *The Aligarh Institute Gazette of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College*, Tuesday, 26 October 1920.
75 Ibid., p. 183.
76 See Chapter 3.
77 Minault and Lelyveld, 'Campaign for a Muslim University', p. 188.

the auspices of the Government of India, along with BHU, which also survived the boycott of government institutions.

The Government of India claimed to be purely secular, transcending the divided religious loyalties of its subjects. But faced with growing sedition and disorder in the country, the British officials involved in the creation of BHU were willing to entertain the possibility, suggested by loyal subjects, that religion would restore respect for social order among the youth of India. If western secular education in the institutions of higher education in India had failed in the goal of producing loyal citizens, perhaps a religious education would better serve the purposes of the Raj. The passing of BHU Bill by the Legislative Council in 1915 can be regarded an attempt to use religion to prop up the British throne. Believing it possible for the British to step into the Hindu social system as legitimate rulers, the British officials involved in the foundation of BHU adopted a notion of Hinduism that was complementary to the Empire.

The British support of religious instruction was closely tied to more profane goals. The departure from a strict policy of secular education in allowing the establishment of Muslim and Hindu universities was strategic planning. The British officials involved in the chartering of BHU and AMU hoped that religious instruction could be used to quell seditious tendencies among the educated youth of India. The Hinduism that the British envisioned for BHU which defined loyalty to the throne as a Hindu virtue, was expressed in Annie Besant's 'little Hindu textbook' chosen for religious instruction at BHU. The definition of the 'Hindu' of BHU at its establishment was a pragmatic construction designed in the hope of harnessing religion for the purpose of political power. Viceroy Hardinge and Harcourt Butler, the Member for Education in the Government of India, had taken a risk in hoping to manipulate the political potential of a united community. They felt the risk was worth taking in creating an institution that would unite Hindus behind the British Raj. For these officials, the establishment of the University proved to be 'a leap in the dark', as other British officials had forewarned. For many Hindus, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the University represented a ground of identity for resisting British domination.

CHAPTER THREE

On Holy Ground: The Politics and Myth of Sacred Geography

Many Hindus considered the very soil on which Banaras Hindu University was constructed as holy ground. The situating of the University in Banaras (or Benares as the city of Varanasi or Kashi was named by the British) bestowed an aura of Hindu sanctity upon the institution, recognized by both Indians and Europeans alike. As J. A. Sauter, a German traveller to Banaras, wrote shortly after the opening of BHU:

> Benares! It is not only a name; not only the memorial of a proud past. It is still, even to-day, the focal point at which is concentrated the whole mental and spiritual life of two hundred and fifty millions of human beings, and whence that life is radiated forth again upon the surging masses of humanity on the Indian frontiers. The mysterious secret power which permeates and controls the religious and even the political life of India has its roots in Benares. If it can be said of any city in the world that it is the heart of a nation, it may truly be said of Benares . . . . It is in the holy city that the Hindu university has just been founded whose exclusive aim it is, not merely to preserve the doctrine of the Vedas, but to preach it to the whole world. More than ever will Benares be the central point of intellectual, religious, literary and political life of Hinduism.[1]

The European portrayal of Banaras was constructed from both western and indigenous perceptions of the city. European scholars, relying upon the testimony of Brahman informants, accepted the view of Banaras as the living embodiment of ancient tradition and reinforced it in the idealization of the city through their own writings. Banaras was designated as the centre of Hindu learning. As William Robertson wrote in 1791, in *A Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India*, 'Benares has been from time immemorial the Athens of India, the residence of the most learned Brahmans, and the seat both of

1 J. A. Sauter, *Among the Brahmins and Pariahs,* translated from the German by Bernard Miall (Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1986), pp. 23–5.

science and literature.'[2] Exalted descriptions of Kashi in Sanskrit texts, newly translated by Orientalist scholars, confirmed the posterity of the city's traditions. Recently, Diana Eck in her popular work *Banaras: City of Light*, perpetuates the perception of Banaras as a timeless, eternal city. She writes that the current lifestyle in Banaras has its roots in the sixth century BC. While cities such as Jerusalem, Athens, and Peking have adapted to modern times, Banaras is still moved by the same ethos as in ancient times.[3] Eck describes the culture and traditions of Banaras as representative of traditional Hinduism. She writes, 'There are few cities as traditionally Hindu and as symbolic of the whole of Hindu culture as the city of Banaras.'[4] Diana Eck's work, based largely upon Puranic descriptions and Orientalist perceptions of Banaras, continues the idealization of the city as the centre of a unitary and ancient Hindu tradition.[5] Early British administrators, co-opting this view of Hinduism as a single unitary tradition and source of authority, attempted to benefit from the influence of Varanasi.[6]

2 Cited in Dalmia, *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, p. 55.

3 Diana Eck, *Banaras: City of Light* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), p. 5.

4 Ibid., p. 6.

5 Dalmia in *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, p. 59, writes, 'In Eck's work, then, the Puranic and the western-indological views fuse effortlessly and finally, as it were.'

6 Ibid., pp. 54–5, Dalmia writes,

> The fame of Banaras was apparently early communicated by the Brahmans of Calcutta to Governor-General Hastings and later to William Jones and his compatriots, in search of authentic Hindu traditions. Kasi's reputation as a religious centre was thus registered and early acquired multi-dimensional authority with British administrators, travellers and historians, who initiated the development of a parallel western tradition of the significance of Kasi. They adopted the Puranic self-representation in part, while historicizing and further stylizing it in their own post-Enlightenment and early Romantic cultural and political terms. They encountered an eminently Hindu city; Muslim presence there was minimal in comparison. The data supplied by Brahmans, who refrained their main informants on this score, confirmed their impression of the city as the ancient centre of Hinduism conceived as a single unitary—however unwieldy—religious tradition and they understood the Brahmans of the city, again viewed as a single body, as a centralizing force, regulating, ordering and administering the religious and learned tradition of the Hindus from the earliest historical period. The first generation of British administrators, following the policy laid down by Warren Hastings of ruling the subject population by their own laws and customs, and inspired by the work of William Jones and the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, attempted to draw benefit from the authority of the learned traditions of the city.

During the early period of the East India Company, the British recognized the importance of the holy city of Banaras and Sanskrit learning. The British first entered Banaras in the late eighteenth century. Learning of the fame of the city, Governor-General Warren Hasting gave support to the British Resident of the city, Jonathan Duncan, to found the Benares Sanskrit College in 1791. Duncan, according to Vasudha Dalmia, believed it was important for the British to have access to the knowledge of Brahman pandits of Banaras. He considered them the religious experts of India, possessing all the knowledge of religion, law, and literature of all the Hindus of India. He attempted to institutionalize the collective learning of the city. He brought in pandits and put them on salaries, paid by the government. Sanskrit literature was gathered, documented, and preserved. As Dalmia writes, apart from the conservation dimensions of this project, the British attempted to acquire and direct knowledge in order to govern more effectively.[7] Later British administrators looked to Banaras for legitimization in similar fashion as the early East India Company.

In the early-twentieth century, British officials involved in the chartering of BHU were also well aware of the symbolic importance of Banaras for their rule. While the British claimed their rule was strictly secular, free of theological underpinnings, it was not uncommon for the British to employ religion in their strategies of power and legitimacy. As Joanne Waghorne writes, the British were quick to realize the potential of playing upon Indian sentiment and ancient loyalties. The British adopted the rituals and pageantry, which symbolized power and authority in India, as a means of instilling loyalty.[8] While the British thought it wise to no longer sponsor Hindu temples or religious festivals, they took a chance in establishing a Hindu temple of learning. The British intended their support of BHU to be seen as a generous gift of a beneficent and legitimate ruler. The ceremonies accompanying the foundation of the University took the form of a royal durbar. As he writes, Viceroy Hardinge could not have been more pleased:

> The ceremony at Benares was a wonderful success, and I have seldom seen a more enthusiastic gathering. After the big Durbar of 1911, it was the finest Durbar that I have seen in India. The arrangements were perfect and the whole scene

7 Ibid., p. 56.

8 Joanne Waghorne, *The Raja's Magic Clothes: Revisioning Kingship and Divinity in England's India* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 33.

picturesque. It was a purely Indian gathering, and there were 6000 spectators from all parts of India in very bright dresses with the Ruling Chiefs in all their gaudiness.[9]

The splendid durbar, which lavishly portrayed the British Viceroy as the magnificent king of kings in the Indian Empire, was clearly staged to appeal to the sentiments of Hindus gathered from all over India.

At the time of the founding of BHU, the nationalists and loyalists alike looked to the revival of Hinduism as grounds for their identity in a changing world, and Banaras represented the ageless foundation of their religion. The image of Banaras as the 'eternal city' had a powerful effect upon those Hindus wishing to escape from the slave mentality imposed by colonialism. Those who hoped BHU would reform and unite Hinduism in response to the challenges of the twentieth century could choose no better site than Banaras to place their aims within the bounds of dignity and honour of timeless tradition.

Part of the perception of Banaras as the quintessential Hindu city is the belief that Banaras, transcending both time and karma, has the power to bestow *moksha* (release from karma-driven cyclic existence). According to the belief of some Hindus, if one dies in Kashi, one will escape the karma of all past misdeeds and the cycle of existence. The city is believed to be poised on the tip of Shiva's trident, suspended between heaven and earth where the forces of karma (the results of past deeds) have no power. The waters of river Ganga, as it flows through Banaras, are also attributed with the power to bestow moksha. The aged and terminally-ill Hindus from other parts of South Asia journey to the city in order to die within its borders. Death is very much part of the daily life of the city as funeral processions wind their way through the city on their way to the cremation grounds on the banks of Ganga. The rituals of Banaras associated with the liberation of souls are believed to be timeless. As Diana Eck writes, 'At Manikarnika cremation ground, there is a sacred fire which is said to have burned constantly for as long as anyone can remember.'[10] But death, according to Eck, is not terrifying in Banaras. Dying unleashes the power of Kashi, the 'power of bestowing liberation, moksha or *mukti*.'[11] The city, as the 'city of death'

9 Hardinge to Butler, 18 Feb. 1916, India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR.F.116/42.

10 Eck, *Banaras*, p. 340.

11 Ibid., p. 325.

and the 'city of life' has long been the focus of faith of Hindus and of attention by western scholars.[12]

The power of the city's ancient traditions, was relied upon to also inspire faith in the unity of Hindus at the time of the establishment of BHU. But events surrounding the selection of the site of BHU campus proved that the traditions of the city were flexible and debatable. The controversy concerned the boundaries of the sacred city. According to local custom, a circumference called the *Panchakroshi* delineates the boundaries of the sacred geography of the city.[13] An ancient pilgrimage road, the Panchakroshi Road, corresponds closely to this circumference. When the site for BHU was being determined, the only site available and large enough to accommodate the campus was at Nagwa, which fell just on the wrong side of the Panchakroshi Road. One might expect that the site committee would take the boundary road seriously, and choose a smaller site within the boundaries of Kashi. However, an argument was made that the land chosen for the University was actually within the boundaries of Kashi. The *kroshi* of Panchakroshi was a unit of measurement approximately two miles in length. The true boundary of Kashi, it was argued, was Panchakroshi or five kroshi, ten miles from the centre of Kashi, the Madhyameshawara Temple.[14] The University Site Committee members argued that because the selected site for BHU fell within ten miles of the temple, the campus would indeed be within sacred geography of Kashi.[15] The Panchakroshi Road, it was argued, did not follow the perfect circumference of Kashi; it wandered here and there in an approximate manner. When this explanation did not satisfy all the Hindus involved in creation of the University, another argument was made by one of the BHU site committee members, Bhagavan Das, a well-respected Banarsi scholar, who explained that the famous ancient poet and teacher, Tulsidas, had made a prophecy that Kashi would grow southwards, upstream, past the current boundary set by the Panchakroshi Road and taking in the site chosen for the University.

While enough people accepted these explanations which placed the University campus within the sacred boundary of Kashi to have the University site approved, accommodation was given for the beliefs of those

12 See also Jonathan Parry, *Death in Banaras* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

13 P. B. Rana Singh, *Pancakrosi Yatra, Varanasi: Sacred Journey, Ecology of Place, and Faithscape* (Vanarasi: Tara Book Agency, 1991), p. 1.

14 Dar and Somaskandan, *History of BHU*, p. 317.

15 Ibid., p. 319.

members of the University who did not believe the argument, by buying a small plot of land on the other side of the Panchakroshi Road, where those members of the University who insisted on living within the boundaries of Kashi could live. According to tradition it was considered necessary to die within the boundaries of Kashi to attain heaven. So, many BHU professors, once they retired and had to give up their University housing, often chose to build their own homes within the boundaries of the Panchakroshi Road, on the other side of the road from the University. One professor explained that he felt that the boundaries of Kashi should not be an issue at the University, because no one at the University was supposed to be seeking mukti, release from rebirth, but should instead be concerned about serving others with devotion according to the bhakti tradition. The professor explained that, 'The essence of bhakti was to serve God/Ramasita in all manifestations.'[16] Teaching students at the University was this professor's way of serving God according to the bhakti tradition and it mattered not if it were done within or outside the sacred bounds of Kashi. The flexibility and diversity of Hindu thought at the University are only hinted at by the arguments that surrounded the selection of the site for the University. But still thousands of students flocked to BHU in pre-independence years because it was different from the British institutions; it was 'Hindu', the only Hindu university in India and more so because it was in Banaras. After its establishment, the University partook of the sacred heritage of the city, but continued to give a new interpretation to the theme of immortality in Banaras.

With such numerous manifestations of Hindu ritual and belief, Hindus accept that there are many ways to the truth. The same can be said of ways to immortality in Hinduism. The University officials emphasized a means of immortality that imparted to BHU a sacred role. The emblem of BHU chosen by the officials depicts the goddess of learning, Saraswati, as conferring the nectar of immortality while seated on her vehicle, the *hamsa* (swan or goose), and encircled by the sacred syllable *Om*. The motto under the emblem reads, '*Vidyaya amritam asnute* (one attains immortality through knowledge).' An article in the journal of BHU, *Prajna*, examines the meaning of the Saraswati symbol for the University. According to the article:

> Sarasvati is the Goddess of Learning, Wisdom and Knowledge . . . . She is Sakti, the propelling energy (Savitri) of Brahma the creator. Sarasvati literally meaning 'born of the waters', has the most intimate association with water . . . *saras* means

16 Ram Mohan Pandey, interview, Banaras, February 1997.

a pool of water, the eternal pond of immortal fluid or *Amrita*, i.e. nectar. That pool is called *Brahma Sara*, i.e. the Pond of Brahman, the fountain source of all cosmic potential that is in nature and beyond nature. Sarasvati is born of the Fountain and hence named Saras-vati, the overflow of that eternal ocean of nectar . . . . This defines the purpose of our educational and literary efforts. The end of knowledge is the attainment of Immortality, i.e., the conquest of Death, victory over the fear of becoming helpless victims of the cosmic process of disintegration, decay, disease and death. The aim of all activity, education, science and art, of beauty and goodness, is the realisation of *Amritam*. . . . The only answer to Death—*Mrityu* or *Kala*—is *Amrita*, and the only technique of obtaining *Amrita* is *Vidya* or Knowledge of all kinds at all levels and its right application. The problem of *amritam* is the supreme problem of man; all else is secondary. . . . Thus the BHU emblem—Sarasvati playing a *Vina*, seated on *Hamsa* (swan) and *Kamala* (lotus) encircled in *Omkara* conferring *Amritam* (immortality) through *Vidya*—is a work of art, bespeaking in the eloquent language of Hindu symbolism the educational and cultural ideals of this University.[17]

Situated in the city where death is viewed on a daily basis, BHU not only partook of the sanctity of Kashi, but also identified itself with the overcoming of death in its role in dispensing knowledge.

The design of the campus also has spiritual significance. The campus is shaped in the form of a half-circle, with streets laid out in concentric semicircles, intersected by streets radiating from the centre like spokes. At the centre was the amphitheatre, where convocations were held. On the first of the concentric semicircle were the colleges. On the next semicircle were the student hostels and the residence of the vice chancellor and other university officers. On the outer rings were the faculty residences. According to one interpretation, the campus of the University was designed as the embodiment of the vehicle of the goddess of learning. The entire design is said to represent the body of the hamsa (swan or goose) of Saraswati with its wings spread.[18] The design of the campus transforms the image of the University from that of a mere institute for higher learning to a spiritual entity, a vehicle of immortality. Another interpretation common in Banaras is that the layout of the campus is modelled on the sunrise and that the sun represents the light of knowledge.

In addition to the auspicious location and design of the University, the manner in which the site of BHU was obtained has also been closely

17 V.S. Agrawala, 'Emblem of Banaras Hindu University: Goddess Sarasvati', *Prajna,* Vol. 8(2) 1962, p. 4.

18 Parmanand, *Mahamana*, Vol. 1, p. 436.

connected with the Hindu tradition of Banaras. Though the University is only of recent origin, a myth has grown up which presents the grounds of BHU as the gift of Maharaja Prabhu Narayan Singh of Banaras, the central Hindu figurehead of the area. There are many versions to the myth. K. P. Singh, a former professor of BHU related the following account of the previous Maharaja of Banaras. Standing on a terrace of his palace, the Maharaja told the professor:

> This is the place where my grandfather and Malaviya were standing when Malaviyaji said, 'Rajasahab, I have come as a beggar to you.' The Maharaja was startled. He said, 'Yes, Malaviyaji, what do you want?' And then with his hand he showed he wanted all this land. The University campus was not there. Some villages were there. He showed with his hand that he wanted all that land. 'Malaviyaji, are you going to start some farm there?' 'Yes, in that farm I want to produce some young men who will be educated and will do some service to the country.' 'Is it that? Then know that all that land belongs to you.'[19]

The story, though, is told in different versions, all of which involve Pandit Malaviya coming before the Maharaja and asking for a boon. The Maharaja agrees to grant him a boon and then the poor Pandit asks for the gift of a large tract of land for BHU. One version of the story has the Maharaja bathing in the Ganga when Pandit Malaviya asks him for a boon. Another version tells that Pandit Malaviya was present at a religious festival when the Maharaja was feeding the Brahmans of the area. When asked by the Maharaja what more he would like, Pandit Malaviya said he would like a large area of land on which to build a university. The story of the Maharaja and Pandit Malaviya is commonly accepted as the true origin of the campus of BHU. According to government records, though, as well as the early records of the University, the land on which the University is built was acquired through imposition of a land acquisition order and against the protest of upper-caste *bhumihar* proprietors and tenants of the very valuable and fully cultivated land.[20]

In the Banaras Regional Archives, there is record that an acquisition order was issued on 17 November 1915 by the government of the United Provinces for the acquisition of approximately 1164 acres from the pargana of Dehat Amanat, including the *mauza*s (villages) of Sri Gobardanpur, Khizirhi, Jangampur, Siswahi, Chettopur, Bhagwanpur, Dhanarjaipur, and

19 K. P. Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.
20 Y. P. Dubey, interview, Banaras, January 1995.

Naria for the site of BHU.[21] The acquisition of such a large tract of land was extremely unusual, as Sheo Karan Nath Misra, a Special Land Acquisition Officer assigned to consider the amount to be paid in compensation to the proprietors and tenants, wrote to the Collector of Banaras.[22] He explained that such a tract of land, of about two square miles, consisting of first-rate cultivated land, under permanent settlement and so close to the city had seldom been taken by forced acquisition. The largest cases of land acquisition were generally in connection with the railways and canals. In these cases the government needed strips of land, sometimes hundreds of miles in length, but extremely small in width. In these cases villages would only lose a small portion of their land. Ejected tenants or owners had plenty of other land to fall back on. But in the case of the land needed for BHU, three entire villages and substantial areas of five other villages would be required. Within the area were nine hundred houses, over seven thousand fruit trees, and over one hundred serviceable wells. There was hardly any portion of the area which could be called actually waste or barren land—over three quarters of the total twelve hundred acres was regularly cultivated land yielding two and in some cases three crops each year. The land was thus a very valuable plot. According to the land acquisition officer, BHU could hardly have chosen a more valuable plot of land from the agricultural point of view. In addition, fixed rate tenants or occupancy tenants had occupied most of the land for some time and were privileged to retain a very low rent. These villages were practically losing all that they possessed in the world. Their houses, groves, their tenures, and their wells, in fact everything they possessed had been taken. The University could not expect the villagers to be in a good frame of mind.

The officer found that maximum compensation rates allowed by standard acquisition rules allowed for twenty times the annual profit, which he regarded as unfair in the case of the land taken by BHU. He recommended that twenty-five times the annual profit be given in compensation to the proprietors of the land. The officer also found that, for all practical purposes, the land held by fixed rates tenants was as valuable as the land of the proprietors. Fixed rate tenures were frequently mortgaged and sold and sale deeds exhibited the same rates as those of the proprietors. Therefore, he recommended that former fixed rate tenants of BHU

21 No. 1843/XV-292, Educational Department, 17 November 1915, Appropriation of Land for a Public Purpose, Government, United Provinces, in Banaras Regional Archives.

22 Sheo Karan Nath Misra, Special Land Acquisition Officer, to the Collector, Benares, 22 May 1916, in Banaras Regional Archives.

land be given up to twenty-five times the annual profit of the land. In the case of occupancy tenants, which the officer found to be the hardest, as they lost everything they possessed, the officer notes that occupancy tenants' interests were not transferable under law, but from the agricultural point of view, they were as valuable as any other. The standard acquisition rules called for compensation which was equal to five times the annual rent paid by the occupant. The officer, due to special hardships suffered by occupancy tenants of the land, recommended that six to twelve times the annual rent be paid to them in compensation.[23]

The officer recommended that the maximum amount be paid to the proprietors and tenants, as the case was special. He felt that if the maximum rates were not given, a large number of the people would not accept the compensation but would prefer to have their cases settled in civil court. Court cases would entangle the University in endless litigation. Paying the maximum would require the University to pay an extra lakh of rupees. But he argued, if the University chose to take such a valuable plot of regularly cultivated land there was absolutely no reason why they should not have to pay the maximum rates. Otherwise the hardship already inflicted on the poor would unnecessarily be intensified.[24]

After the land was acquired, the dispossessed tenants would be rendered homeless. Measures had to be taken to relocate them. The University tried unsuccessfully through private negotiations to purchase a plot of land in the pargana of Dehat Amanat, which encompassed land villages of Kewada, Karamjitpur, and Karundi. Again the University called upon the local government to issue an acquisition order, which forced the landholders to relinquish the land to the University. Compensation for the land was determined to be Rs 12,460 with a reduction of Rs 19 for land revenue.[25]

After the initial acquisition of land for the Nagwa campus site, the University required additional plots of land. In 1917, the university officials wanted to expand the boundary of the University. As the proprietors of the land were unwilling to part with it, the University obtained another land acquisition order from the local government.[26] Again in 1921, the University made an application for yet another acquisition of land. It was in con-

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 No. 294 of 1917 from A. W. Pim, District Officer of Benares to the Commissioner, Benares Division, Benaras, 3 November 1917, Banaras Regional Archives.

26 No. 1226 of 1917, from G. H. Lambert, District Officer of Benares to the Commissioner, Benares District, 15 January, 1917, in Banaras Regional Archives.

nection with this acquisition that the Maharaja was involved. The University wanted 75 acres of land for the purpose of building a canal to irrigate some 2100 acres of land, which the Maharaja of Banaras had agreed to lease to the University for the purpose of establishing a farm that was to be connected with a planned College of Agriculture.[27] The cost of constructing the canal and erecting a pumping plant for irrigation would cost one lakh. Rai Ganga Ram Bahadur of Lahore had offered to pay for the costs of the canal as a donation to BHU. In 1923, Pandit Malaviya still had not acquired the land through private negotiations and wrote to the Commissioner, Benares Division asking 'the Government to take the necessary action for the acquisition of the land in question as early as may be practicable.'[28] By 1924, J. B. Darwin, the Deputy Collector for Banaras reported that the total area acquired by the University was 1214.21 acres. The University was required to pay revenue on the cultivated land in its possession, land on which roads, gardens, or buildings had not yet been constructed. The cultivated land consisted on 53,953 acres.[29]

According to the land acquisition records, all the land acquired for the new BHU campus was through land acquisition orders after the university officials were unable to purchase the land through private contract. Since the story told by the land acquisition records and associated documents is at such variance with the standard account of the land as the gift of the Maharaja, it would be easy to suspect that the records did not reveal fully the nature of the transaction. But interestingly, even though the current Maharaja and administrators of BHU retell the story of the Maharaja giving the gift of land as a boon to the poor Brahman, the official account of the University, *History of Banaras Hindu University,*[30] published by BHU does not include any mention of the Maharaja giving the land. But neither does it give a full description of the process whereby the land came under the possession of the University. In a chapter, 'University Site and the Holy Kashi', which details the selection of the Nagwa site, the author only mentioned that, 'necessary steps for the acquisition of the land were initiated.'[31] There is no explanation that the owners of

27 Dar and Somaskandan, *History of BHU,* p. 463.

28 Madan Mohan Malaviya, Vice-Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University, to J. C. Smith, Commissioner, Benares Division, 3 March 1923, in Banaras Regional Archives.

29 Letter from J. H. Darwin, I.C.S., Deputy Collector of Benares to the Commissioner, Benares District, 17 January 1924, in Banaras Regional Archives.

30 Dar and Somaskandan, *History of BHU.*

31 Ibid., p. 317.

the land refused to sell the land and that legal acquisition of the Nagwa site was required. The chapter is devoted to providing evidence that the University site lay within the sacred boundaries of Kashi. The argument that Tulsi Das prophesied that Kashi would grow southward, encompassing the University campus, was considered a solace to a dispossessed villagers.[32] The omission of the events concerning the acquisition of land, intentional or not, leaves room for the myth.

The account of the Maharaja of Banaras giving the land for BHU to Pandit Malaviya corresponds to a common theme in Hindu myths in which a righteous raja bestows upon a poor Brahman a generous boon. In the Mahabharata, the poor Brahman sage Atri, for example, before forsaking his worldly duties and retiring to the forest, approaches the king Vainya to ask for wealth to leave to his sons. The king dutifully granted the boon.[33] The figures of the righteous raja and the Brahman sage are complementary figures. The authority of the raja in the physical realm supports the authority of the Brahman in the realm of the spiritual and vice versa.[34] The spiritual powers of the Brahman, as in the myth of the sage Bharadvaja, can powerfully affect the success of the raja. In the *Saukhyana Srauta Sutra,* Bharadvaja receives gifts and wealth from three rajas, Prastoka

32 According to Dar and Somaskandan, in *History of BHU*, p. 328, Bhagwan Das wrote, 'It may be interesting here that one of the comparatively recent seers of Hindudom, Tulsi Das—a re-incarnation of Valmiki as popular tradition would have it—has left behind a prophecy that Kashi would grow southwards, upstream, in which direction is the site selected. So were the site seeking members of the Hindu University Society told by one of the occupants with a regretful smile of resignation—regretful because of his own coming dispossession, smiling and resigned because of the coming fulfillment of the prophecy and the better hopes of a better Hinduism.'

33 Mahabharata 12.183.1–32, in *Mahabharata*, Vol. 3 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1997).

34 John E. Mitchiner, in *Traditions of the Seven Rsis* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982), p. 224, writes of the mutual necessity of Brahmans and kings:
'In several instances, Rsis are depicted as giving instruction on the necessity for and duties of kings. Thus Bharadvaja is said to have composed a *raja-sastra*, or treatise on the duties of kings; in a similar manner Vasistha instructed king Mucukunda on the interrelations between kings and their Purohitas—to the effect that a king depends on his Purohita for success, while a kingdom depends on a king. This question of the political involvement of the Rsis generally conform to—and may be considered in connection with—the more general theory of Brahmin-Ksatriya relations, where it is the duty of the king or ksatriya to rule to and to protect the Brahmin, while it is the duty of the Brahmin to legitimate and sanctify the power of the king.'

Srnjaya, Abhyavartin Cayamana, and Bribu Taksan and in return gives them all victory in battle.[35] When the rajas refused to grant the boons of Brahmans, they were subjected to dire curses.[36] The myth of the generous raja bestowing the boon to the Brahman sage, not only made for good stories in the Sanskrit literature, but it also had its modern applications. As historian Vasudha Dalmia relates, the theme of the gift of the ruler to a poor Brahman, for instance, has been incorporated into the story of the lineage of the maharajas of Banaras in an attempt to ground the rulers in Brahmanical tradition:

> The story of the rajas of Banaras has been told often. It is well-known that the lineage had a late origin, when at the tail end of the Mughal Empire the province of Avadh, of which Banaras was a part, began to establish virtual autonomy . . . . The pressure of legitimation early made for emphasis on the pre-Muslim roots of the sovereignty of the Banaras House. In the *Bulwuntnamah* of Faqir Kheir-ad-Din Khan, the story is told of Raja Banar, who was later to be defeated by the army of Muhammad Ghazna, making a gift of land to a pious Brahman by the name of Kuthoo Misr from the nearby village of Otataria. This worldly gift was made to the ascetical Brahman against his wishes. When he discovered that he had been thus endowed with land, the Brahman cursed the raja:
>
> *Becoming very angry, he declared that as the Raja had succeeded in entangling him in the concerns of the world, altogether against his desires, the Rajah's government of Benares would pass from him to his, Kuthoo's sons. And thus it came to pass that, several centuries later, in the reign of Muhammad Shah, one of this lineage, Mansaram, began to gain power.*

Remarkable here is the emphasis on the Brahman ancestry of Mansaram, who was a Bhumihar. The Bhumihars were a caste settled mainly in what is today western Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh. They had always tended to claim Brahmanical status, but they did not carry out priestly functions and were essentially landed classes with distinct customs and practices. In the *Balwuntnamah* the claims of royalty as well as of Brahmanhood were projected back into time, making them thus all the more inviolable.[37]

The story serves to locate the origin of Banaras rajas in the ancient Hindu past. But it was not until 1734 that Mansaram, the son of a small

35 Ibid., cited on pp. 228–9.

36 Mahabharata 13.53.20 tells of a king's reaction to a rishi's request for meal: 'Through fear of the rishi's curse, the king had caused all kinds of foods to be gathered and got ready for his guest.' Also see 'Cursing Kings', in *Traditions of the Seven Rishis*, pp. 230–3.

37 Dalmia, *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, pp. 65–6.

bhumihar landowner, worked himself into the position of receiving the zamindari of Banaras from Safdar Jung, the nawab of Avadh, thus placing Mansaram as the head of the lineage of the Banaras rajas. After Mansaram's death, the title of raja was bestowed upon his son Balwant Singh by the Mughal emperor in Delhi and by the nawab of Avadh. The lineage has continued until today, though not through a direct bloodline. While the lineage was created through the association of bhumihars with Mughal rulers, the myth of the gift of the Brahman creates a royal and Brahmanical past for the lineage of the Banaras rajas.

Aside from the myth surrounding the origins of the Banaras lineage, the characterization of the lineage of the Maharaja as traditionally Hindu was not a dominant feature in the reigns of the early rajas; it developed with the collapse of the Mughal Empire and the rise of British administration and patronage. As Vasudha Dalmia argues, there is 'no evidence to show that Mansaram set out to establish a Hindu kingdom in defiance of the Muslims.'[38] His son, Balwant Singh is known to have equally patronized the Hindu traditions of the city and the Indo-Persian culture of the nawab's court in Avadh. Balwant Singh's heir, Chait Singh, his illegitimate son by a Rajput woman, during a period of indirect rule also partook of both Indo-Persian court culture and Hindu traditions. After Warren Hastings deposed Balwant Singh, the British allowed his relative Mahip Narayan to administer the province, though, it was annexed as a part of British India. It was during this period, as Bernard Cohn and Vasudha Dalmia have argued, that a certain 'Hinduization' of Banaras culture was to emerge. The collapse of the Mughal Empire, together with the fall of the service class and landholding Muslim elites saw a flourishing of Hindu wealth among Hindu classes as well as religious patronage. It was during the period of Udit Narayan Singh (1795–1835) that the Hindu religious and cultural life of Banaras bloomed. After having been relieved of all his administrative duties, the titular figurehead, together with Hindu merchants took up patronage of local religious traditions. While Banaras had a long tradition of *Ramlilas*, it was not until this time, that a member of the present lineage of maharajas sponsored the play, which took place around the township of Ramnagar, the present location for the Rama epic. It was Udit Narayan Singh, who first represented himself as the god Shiva in the play. Dalmia explains the raja taking the role of Shiva in the Ramlila, an eminently Vaishnava play, was an important means of consolidating support of two of the dominant religious commu-

38 Ibid., p. 67.

nities of Banaras. As patron of the festive activity, the maharaja quickly acquired specifically Hindu religious leadership in Banaras, subsuming within himself the whole Puranic *mahatmya* of the city.[39]

The Hindu characterization of the court of Banaras rajas continued into the reign of Ishwari Narayan Singh (1835–89), who founded the Dharma Sabha of Kashi in late 1960s in defence of sanatana dharma Hindu tradition against efforts at reforms and challenges to orthodoxy by Dayanand Saraswati, founder of the reformist movement, the Arya Samaj.[40] The Dharma Sabha, Dalmia argues, played an important part in the development of the traditional Hindu response to the challenges of the modern era. Maharaja Prabha Narayan Singh, who supported the foundation of BHU (not through the gift of the land, but by the donation of one lakh rupees) continued the patronage of the Dharma Sabha, as well as the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal. The rajas of Banaras, deprived of political power, but under the protection and patronage of the British, helped to create the Hindu foundation employed by both nationalists and loyalists. The rajas, though, remained loyal to the British throne. As in the case of the British support of the creation of BHU, British officials not only tolerated the rajas' patronage of religious and cultural activity, from which the British indirectly benefited but also encouraged it. While the British supported the symbolic Hindu authority of the rajas, the cooperative attitude of the rajas would inspire loyalty in the Hindu population. As Chapter 2 has argued, the British officials involved in the creation of BHU believed that a renaissance of Hindu tradition would promote loyalty to the Raj. Both the British and Indian royalty, including the Maharaja of Banaras, hoped to secure their positions by the establishment of BHU. Their support of the institution would place them in the role of beneficent rulers and patrons of Hindu culture and religion.

The myth of the origin of the campus of BHU serves to place the Maharaja of Banaras and the University in a mythic light of Hindu antiquity. The myth reinforces the legitimacy of the Maharaja of Banaras as a beneficent Hindu figurehead. Earlier in the Banaras area, there were many subjects who would have contested this portrayal. In the early years of the twentieth century, when the students of BHU were becoming involved in the independence movement, the subjects of the State of Banaras, over which the Maharaja ruled, were fighting their own struggle against the tyranny, not of the British, but of the Maharaja. The agitation of the Praja

39 Ibid., p. 77.
40 Dalmia, p. 79.

Mandal Movement,[41] a democratic movement against the tyrannical rule of the Maharaja, which continued from 1921 until 1947, is now largely forgotten. The Maharaja of the myth, the righteous ruler, predominates.

The story subordinates the fact that the ruling authority was not the Maharaja, but the British Raj, officials of which were called upon by Pandit Malaviya to take land from other less powerful Hindus and portrays the establishment of BHU as an almost epic event. The story also obscures the fact that Lord Hardinge, the British Viceroy, and Harcourt Butler, the Member for Education, were the ruling patrons, in a sense and not the Maharaja.[42] The myth encouraged the common perception that it was through the heroic efforts of Pandit Malaviya alone that the University was founded. The British intentions for BHU to be a loyalist institution, a Hindu bastion against sedition, are overlooked.[43] The fact that the university officials dispossessed three Hindu villages, forcing the people to leave their homes, wells, crops, and orchards is now forgotten. The myth sets BHU above the mundane level of politics and land acquisition.

The story creation was an important means of resistance against colonial domination. Myth-making from ancient times has had only little to do with factual truth and a lot to do with the construction of meaning and group identity. Through the narrative of the Maharaja granting the boon of land to Pandit Malaviya, the role of the British in it was washed from history. In their stead, the University, its founder, and the Maharaja were portrayed as the true agents of heroic action. The story is now as common in Banaras as any of the tales of the epics or Puranas. The myth of the University, now a part of the multiple myths of Banaras, has helped to give the University its Hindu colour. The famed campus became a point on the circuit of sacred sites for many Hindu pilgrims who visit Banaras. One of the most memorable visitors to the University was Mahatma Gandhi, who went to BHU campus early in his campaign against the British to rally support both for the Indian independence movement and national education.

41 An unpublished PhD Thesis, 'Cultural History of Varanasi in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,' completed at BHU by S. K. Singh in 1990, includes a chapter on the Praja Mandal Movement.

42 On 18 February 1916, Lord Hardinge wrote to Butler, 'It is very satisfactory to feel that this venture in Indian education, for whose birth you and I are chiefly responsible, has been successfully launched.' India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR.F.116/42.

43 Parmanand, in *Mahamana*, Vol. 1, described the elaborate ceremony of the laying of foundation stone of 4 February 1916, which Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy attended. He wrote, 'Loyalty was indeed the keynote of the function.'

CHAPTER FOUR

Gandhi's Challenge to BHU: Boycott of BHU and Nationalist Education

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mahatma Gandhi were both vigorous champions of nationalism. They also had definite, but conflicting ideas on national education. The personalities and proclivities of the two men were stamped on their educational schemes. While the following chapters address the nature of national education at Banaras Hindu University, it is useful to look closely at Gandhi's specific views on education and their implementation, in order to gain a perspective on the educational experience offered at BHU. Gandhi is often understood as having held an all-embracing universal perspective. It is easy to assume that the education that he supported would be cosmopolitan. On the other hand, one might imagine that education at BHU, founded by an orthodox Brahman, would be puritanical, exclusive, and yes, backward. Gandhi's ideas on national education, as the following will illustrate, contrasted greatly with those of BHU, but not in the way we might expect.

At the turn of the century, the development of a truly national system of education was the concern of many Indians who were alarmed at the deleterious influence of westernization on Indian culture. The chief culprit and carrier of western culture was the British system of higher education in India. As Aurobindo Ghose wrote, 'In India, the disastrous effects of the system on body, mind and character are only too apparent.'[1] As discussed in Chapter 1, the British universities of India were considered exotics on Indian soil along with other institutions and ideas of an alien culture. Many in the United Provinces supported the foundation of a national system of education that would teach respect for indigenous culture and traditions and serve the needs of the Indians instead of the needs of the British Government of India.

1 Aurobindo Ghose, *A System of National Education: Some Preliminary Ideas* (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1924), p. 3.

The initial attempts to create national education in the United Provinces were part of socio-religious reform movements. In the late nineteenth century, the Arya Samaj established the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic schools and colleges, as well as traditional *gurukuls* that emphasized and reformed Hindu culture. Many welcomed the foundation of Annie Besant's Central Hindu College in Banaras as a similar step. Though some did not think the national education at Besant's college went far enough,[2] the successful transformation of the Central Hindu College into BHU in 1915 was heralded as the first truly national university in India, one that would promote Hindu religion and culture.[3]

The cultural nationalism of these institutions imparted to Indian nationalism a distinct Hindu appearance and played a significant role in the development of both political nationalism and the Congress party.[4] In the Bengal *swadeshi* movement, after the plan for partition was announced in 1905, Satish Chandra Mukherjee launched a movement for national education as means of resistance against the British. The Arya Samaj institution, the Gurukul Kangri at Haridwar, for instance, was prominent in the initial efforts of the Civil Disobedience campaign in 1930. Other nationalist institutions, such as the Prem Mahavidyalaya of Vrindavan founded by Mahendra Pratap of Mursan, were also involved in the support of civil disobedience and other nationalist efforts such as giving instruction to villagers in spinning, hygiene, good citizenship, and economics.[5] The Non-cooperation Movement of 1920 resulted in the creation of many national educational institutions. By the end of July 1921, 137 such institutions with 8476 students had been established in the United Provinces alone. The most important of these was Kashi Vidyapith in Banaras, established according to Gandhi's wishes by Congress members as an alternative to BHU that was funded in part by the

2 Ibid., p. 16. Ghose wrote, 'The adoption of the English system under an Indian disguise in institutions like the Central Hindu College is likely to lead to the European result. That it is better than nothing is all that can be said for it.'

3 According to *United Provinces Native Newspaper Reports*, No. 6 of 1916, p. 131, the editor of the *Rohilkhand Gazette* (Bareilly) of 8 Feb. 1916 remarked that 'the event will be written large in the history of India as being the first instance of Government's entrusting Indians directly with the management and control of an educational institution.' The same report, p. 130, stated that the editor of the *Leader* regarded the establishment of the opening of the university as the 'birth of the Hindu Renaissance'.

4 Pandey, *Ascendancy of the Congress*, p. 59.

5 Ibid.

Government of India. BHU supported by many Hindus, and Kashi Vidyapith, an organ of the Congress party, offered competing claims of national education based upon very different visions of Pandit Malaviya and Mahatma Gandhi.

The pre-independence years of BHU were largely influenced by the personality of Pandit Malaviya. He envisioned the University as a departure from the standard fare of British higher education. BHU would be the first Indian university providing a nationalist education. A majority of the administrators and professors would be Indian, representing the whole of India. Indian knowledge, including science, medicine, history and culture, languages and literatures that were ignored in British education, would be able to come into its own at BHU. The University would work to instil pride in Indian culture and knowledge, counteracting the sense of inferiority produced among the Indian citizenry by the state of subjectivity to the British Raj. In the eyes of Pandit Malaviya and the other supporters of the University, the establishment of BHU marked a major advance for the cause of Indian national autonomy. However, after the opening of BHU, Gandhi called for its closure. Gandhi preached that the education being given at the University was not nationalist education; he wanted to create a 'purer and truer' national education.[6] The events surrounding Gandhi's challenge to Pandit Malaviya and his institution brought out major differences in approach to nationalist education, including a difference in the opinion over the role of religion in that education.

In 1920, only five years after the establishment of BHU, Mohandas K. Gandhi called for a boycott of British education. The boycott was to be a part of Gandhi's larger scheme of non-cooperation with the British, which also included boycott of foreign goods and promotion of Indian-made goods, especially hand-woven cloth.[7] Gandhi called for all students to leave their studies at all those schools, colleges, and universities that were aided by the Government of India. He also called for the creation of national educational institutions that would be free of government influence. New alternatives were opened to students who obeyed the boycott, but wished to continue their studies. National schools were opened. National colleges, called vidyapiths, were established. Students

6 Gandhi in *Young India*, 27 Oct. 1920, cited in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.18 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1971), p. 378.

7 Ibid., pp. 279ff, see the Report on Draft Instructions for Congress Organizations,

could also attend schools in ashrams established by Gandhi and his followers.

GANDHI'S EFFORTS TO CLOSE BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY

As BHU received partial funding from the government, it was also a target for Gandhi's boycott. Pandit Malaviya, who had gone to great lengths to acquire British support for his national university that would be operated solely by Indians, did not agree with Gandhi's tactics and refused to comply. It was a moment of gravity, as Gandhi, who was attempting to rally support for his political strategy, faced solid opposition from Pandit Malaviya, who was one of the highly regarded leaders of the nationalist movement and INC. Gandhi set out to win over public opinion with a series of speeches condemning Pandit Malaviya, even lecturing on the campus of BHU in an effort to draw away Pandit Malaviya's students.

During the campaign against Pandit Malaviya and BHU, and thereafter, Gandhi often said that Pandit Malaviya was like an elder brother to him. Pandit Malaviya was only eight years older than Gandhi, but as early as 1886, before Gandhi left his parental home to travel to England as a shy and awkward young law student, Pandit Malaviya was giving an eloquent speech before the second session of the Congress. Pandit Malaviya demanded from the British that there be no taxation without representation. Dadabhai Naoroji, the presiding Congress president, rose after hearing Pandit Malaviya and declared, 'Mother India is herself resonant in the voice of this young man'.[8] Pandit Malaviya was involved in the swadeshi movement when Gandhi was still in South Africa.[9] Pandit Malaviya became president of the Congress in 1909. As president of the Congress, Pandit Malaviya received a letter from Gandhi who was in the Transvaal. Gandhi suggested that Congress adopt satyagraha and elaborated on its efficacy. Pandit Malaviya responded to Gandhi's letter by encouraging Gandhi's efforts to defend the rights of Indians in South Africa and sending him Congress funds for his support.[10] One of Gandhi's first public speeches after returning from South Africa was at the open-

22 Sept. 1920, for full description of the resolutions on non-cooperation.

8 Cited by Chaturvedi, *Madan Mohan Malaviya*, p. 69.

9 Ibid., p. 74.

10 Parmanand, *Mahamana*, p. 165.

ing of BHU in 1915, where he had been invited to speak by Pandit Malaviya. The latter had high regard for Gandhi, but did not always agree with him and never considered himself a disciple of Gandhi. In London at the Round Table Conference of 1931, where both Gandhi and Pandit Malaviya participated, Pandit Malaviya was asked by King George V, 'Are you a follower of Gandhi?' Pandit Malaviya replied, 'No, I am his colleague.'[11]

After his return from South Africa, Gandhi was somewhat a minor political leader in India. As he became involved in protests against the Rowlatt bills, in the Khilafat Movement, and in the aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in the Punjab, Gandhi began to gain political prominence as a national leader. He began to make use of the press to publish his ideas through two weekly magazines, *Young India* and *Navajivan*. While he earlier agreed with moderate politicians like Pandit Malaviya, who sought constitutional reforms leading to self-rule for India, Gandhi by 1920 was convinced that total non-cooperation with the Government of India was the only solution for India's oppression. Gandhi first began his campaign for non-cooperation through the press and through the Khilafat Movement network. As Judith Brown writes, Gandhi 'obviously put pressure on political leaders to support it to some extent if they did not wish to appear timid in the national cause.'[12]

In September 1920, shortly after calling for students to boycott British education, Gandhi published an article in *Young India* that pointed the finger at those who did not support his position. He wrote, 'Much is said and written against the proposed boycott of Government-controlled schools and colleges. The proposal has been described as "mischievous", "harmful", "opposed to the best interest of the country", etc. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya is among its most uncompromising opponents.'[13] Gandhi went on to inform his readers that Pandit Malaviya was opposing him because he was not so sensitive to the oppressive acts committed by the British, 'In other words, the opponents do not sufficiently realize the significance of the Punjab and the khilafat wrongs . . . . It is unthinkable that Malaviyaji and Shastriar cannot feel the wrongs as I do. And yet that is precisely my meaning.'[14]

11 Chaturvedi, *Mahamana*, p. 87.
12 Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 153.
13 From Gandhi's article, 'The Hallucination of Schools and Colleges' in *Young India*, 27 Sept. 1920, as cited in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.18, pp. 306 ff.
14 Ibid.

Gandhi's denigration of Pandit Malaviya's sympathies provoked response among the readers of *Young India*. A group of readers, admirers of Gandhi, were clearly troubled by Gandhi's unnecessary slur against Pandit Malaviya. They pointed out to Gandhi that both Shastriar and Pandit Malaviya had showed sufficient evidence of their deep feeling in regard to British oppression. The readers were puzzled by Gandhi's stooping to irrational attacks on those who differed from him and asked Gandhi to refrain from such tactics:

> Mahatma Gandhi himself has said so much on the question of individual liberty and the importance of following one's conscience, that we can hardly believe that he would, by any action of his, try to curtail the one, or silence the other. But that is what the article indirectly attempts to do . . . . We appeal to Mahatma Gandhi not to make such equivocal statements, we appeal to the modern Buddha not to excite emotions, to base his arguments on reason alone, and trust he will see the impropriety of the statements he has made and will hasten to make reparation for the same.[15]

Gandhi did not apologize to the students for his comments about Pandit Malaviya's lack of feeling. His response in *Young India* was to deny that he was in any way attempting to curtail difference of opinion.[16]

By the middle of 1920, Gandhi's influence was such that many leaders who did not agree with him would not do so openly. At the thirty-fifth session of the Indian National Congress at Nagpur in December 1920, Gandhi promoted the Non-cooperation Resolution, which called for active, but non-violent overthrow of the government.[17] While many people had serious misgivings about Gandhi's strategy, few had the courage to stand in direct opposition to Gandhi.[18] One of the exceptions was Pandit Malaviya. He was not present at the Congress session due to illness. But Gandhi reported Pandit Malaviya's position in a speech before the vote began, 'He [Malaviya] has now seen the Resolution and has sent a message saying that he is not all in favour of the Resolution. If he had been here he would have noted a respectful protest before this Congress.'[19] But following Gandhi's speech, the Resolution was passed unanimously.

15 Letter to the editor, *Young India*, 27 Oct. 1920, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.18, pp. 382–3.
16 Ibid., pp. 383–4.
17 Gandhi's speech on creed resolution at plenary session of Congress, 28 Dec. 1920, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.19, pp. 164 ff.
18 Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, p. 171.
19 Gandhi in speech on non-cooperation resolution at Nagpur, 30 Dec. 1920, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.19, pp. 185 ff.

Pandit Malaviya was not totally opposed to non-cooperation. He found it ironical that Gandhi's total boycott of the British government was not really total. Pandit Malaviya argued that if Congress was not going to boycott railways, postal and telegraph systems, municipalities, which were all funded by the government, then reason should tell them not to discard English education.[20] Pandit Malaviya's point was that if Gandhi had no qualms with continuing to use the useless amenities of the British Raj, then education should be included among those amenities. In Pandit Malaviya's speeches against the educational boycott, he argued that Indian students should first be given their education, then they could commit themselves to service for the nation and engage in non-cooperation. Pandit Malaviya felt the students' lives would be otherwise short-changed and that without an education they would be less fit to serve their country. Pandit Malaviya argued that the educational system, though in need of reform, should not be discarded altogether. He pointed out that most of the men in the forefront of the national movement, including Gandhi, were products of English education. Further, Pandit Malaviya argued that education was in the hands of the Indians since the Government of India Act of 1919 had made education a 'transferred' subject, and that an Indian held the education portfolio in the central government. More than 90 per cent of the teachers employed in the British-supported schools were Indians and that the schools were financed with Indian money.[21]

Concerning BHU, Pandit Malaviya pointed out that the University functioned autonomously and that the government rarely interfered in its operation. He argued that the University charter prevented British officials involved in the supervision of BHU to interfere in the academic affairs. Academic freedom meant that Pandit Malaviya was free to promote *swaraj* at the University. The professors were not hindered from teaching and promoting nationalist thought among the students.[22] Concerning the government grant for the University, Pandit Malaviya pointed out that the source of the British funding was the people of India. Furthermore, donations from many Indian princes were contingent on the government grant. If the government grant were withdrawn, the princes would also withdraw their support. Pandit Malaviya believed that Indi-

20 Madan Mohan Malaviya as cited by S. L. Gupta in *Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya: A Sociological Study*, (Allahabad: Chugh Publications, 1978), p. 200.

21 Ibid.

22 Parmanand, *Mahamana*, Vol. 2, p. 563.

ans should take full advantage of every benefit being offered by the British even while working to gain independence for themselves. As Pandit Malaviya's son, Padmakant Malaviya, explained, in all his father's decisions, whether public, private, political or otherwise, 'above all he believed in the advice of our great sage Manu: One should accept nectar even if it comes out of poison.'[23]

Gandhi reacted to Pandit Malaviya's opposition to his leadership by placing him on the wrong side in the battle of good and evil. Using the figures of Rama, the righteous king and Ravana, the demonic enemy of Rama in Ramayana, Gandhi placed the British in Ravana's camp. He accused, Pandit Malaviya of supporting the 'satanic' British government:

> There is a war on at present between Ravana and Ramarajya. It is a war between God and Satan, conflict between evil people and good people. I see that this Government is possessed with a Satanic spirit. I have been spreading this idea since I awoke to the truth. I believe that the British government is Satanic, has the nature of a demon . . . . Hence it is that a difference of opinion has arisen between me and Shri Shastriar and Pandit Malaviya, both of whom I feel great reverence and whose close friendship I value and for whom, even now, I have great regard. They believe that there is an element of goodness in this Government; I believe that it is a sinful one.[24]

Gandhi had begun to speak of the Raj as being satanic shortly after he had first publicly denounced the government in July 1920. As the government possessed an evil spirit, British aid in any form was to be shunned as satanic, as poison. Gandhi said that even the education provided by Pandit Malaviya at BHU was 'poisoned' by British influence. Studying the Gita there would be like studying under the guidance of Ravana. It would be a sin.[25] Gandhi visited various universities, schools, and colleges in an attempt to draw away the students and teachers into the non-cooperation movement. Gandhi warned students that they should not be lured by even the promise of a free education, but should realize that the temptation was a satanic device. He told them the Raj was *Ravanarajya* and that they 'should not go to the schools of Ravana which are full of satanic things.'[26]

23 Padmakant Malaviya, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library, p. 31.
24 Gandhi's speech at Public Meeting, Broach, 2 Nov. 1920, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 18, pp. 414 ff.
25 Gandhi in *Young India*, 27 Oct. 1920, cited in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 18, p. 379.
26 Gandhi's speech at Dacca, 15 Dec. 1920, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.19, pp.120 ff.

When Gandhi visited the campus of BHU in November 1920, Pandit Malaviya invited him to speak before the students. Professor Gyanchand, who was teaching at BHU at that time, reports that nothing was done on campus to deter Gandhi's entrance, 'Mahatma Gandhi was allowed to address the students and the staff, and do whatever he could, to get the students out of the University. No difficulty was placed in his way.'[27] Pandit Malaviya allowed Gandhi to speak persuasively to the students concerning non-cooperation. Gandhi said:

> I do not wish to go into why this Empire is Satanic. But an Empire which has been guilty of the atrocities in the Punjab, which killed children six or seven years old by making them walk in the heat, which dishonoured women, which has said that the officials who did this had committed no crimes but had saved its rule—to study in schools of such an Empire is, to my mind, the greatest adharma of all. To Panditji, an elder brother to me, this seems dharma. My shastras do not teach me so. I cannot learn from Ravana the Gita, the Koran or the Bible.[28]

Gandhi implied that Hindu religious education was impossible in a government-sponsored university. He explained to the students of BHU that Pandit Malaviya considered studying Hindu religion in the University as dharma (righteousness), but to Gandhi it was the greatest *adharma* (unrighteousness) of all. Gandhi called for a return of the British charter for BHU, as well as refusal of government grants. He condemned pride in the stately buildings of the new campus of BHU and urged the students to leave their studies:

> Being enamored of degrees, we have been demanding 'charters' all the time. Why do we refuse to learn under these trees? Why should we want such palatial buildings? If you feel for the country, if the fire which has been raging in me also rages in you, forget everything about buildings and take to non-cooperation as I have been advising.[29]

After Gandhi finished his speech, Pandit Malaviya rose and addressed the students, explaining to them the problems he saw in the non-cooperation movement. He asked the students to consider the issues carefully and then to decide for themselves whether or not to engage in non-cooperation. Around two hundred, less than a fourth of the total

27 Gyanchand, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library.
28 Gandhi at students' meeting, 27 Nov. 1920, Banaras, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.19, pp. 27 ff.
29 Ibid.

number of students, decided to discontinue their studies. A few teachers and staff members left as well. One of the outstanding figures among them was Acharya J. B. Kripalani.[30]

J. B. Kripalani was a teacher at BHU when Gandhi called for the boycott. In 1918, when Pandit Malaviya was presiding over the Congress session, Gandhi had suggested Kripalani as a young man who could be Pandit Malaviya's assistant. Kripalani had participated in the Champaran movement with Gandhi. Pandit Malaviya accepted the young man as his assistant. After the Congress session concluded, he invited Kripalani to teach at BHU.[31] When Gandhi came to the campus to ask the students to leave the University, he asked Kripalani to continue teaching at BHU so that he could continue to have influence on the students who did not leave. Kripalani remained on the campus, but saw that the students who left the University in answer to Gandhi's call did not know what to do. As Gandhi had given them no specific directives as to what they should do when they left the University, some of the students, having given up their studies, just went home. About thirty of them went to the local Congress leaders for direction.[32] Among the leaders were Bhagavan Das, who was famous for his writing and work in the Theosophical Society, his son Prakasa, and Shiv Prasad Gupta, a wealthy zamindar and philanthropist who supported the cause of Hindi, owned a Hindi press and the Hindi newspaper, *Aaj,* in Banaras.[33] J. B. Kripalani, as a faculty member of BHU, at first chose to respect the policy of the University of not participating in political activism. Kripalani did not

30 Gyanchand, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library.

31 J. B. Kripalani, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library, pp. 150–1.

32 Sampurnanand in interview with Dr Hari Dev Sharma, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Museum, p. 22, told of two classes of politicians in Banaras:
Sharma: Before we come to your career in the Kashi Vidyapith, I would just like you to tell us about the politics in Banaras. Who were the local leaders?
Sampurnanand: Shri Shiv Prasad Gupta, Babu Bhagavan Das and Babu Sri Prakasa were, I should say, the most important persons.
Sharma: The first rank?
Sampurnanand: The first rank, yes. Well, it all depends on what you mean by first rank. They were what you might call the social class. In the workers' rank, there were other people. There were two clear strata among the workers. One was the social class, the other was not exactly the social class.
Sharma: Who were they?
Sampurnanand: Shri Shiv Vinayak Misra, Dr Abdul Karim, Babu Baijnath Singh, and Prof. Ram Das Gaur.

33 Kripalani, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library, pp.150–1.

approach the students who had left the University, but allowed them to go to the local leaders.[34]

Gandhi had called for the creation of 'purer and truer' educational institutions to replace the government-sponsored universities.[35] The Congress and Khilafat conference made efforts to establish national universities, colleges, and schools. The Gujarat Vidyapith had been opened on 15 November 1920, with Gandhi as its Chancellor. In February 1921 Gandhi opened the National College in Calcutta with Subhas Bose as the principal. In January, thousands of students had left their colleges in Calcutta in answer to C. R. Das's appeal to students to boycott education. In Bihar, the Bihar Vidyapith was started at Patna. Efforts were also made to convert the universities that already claimed national status—Banaras Hindu University and Aligarh Muslim University. Gandhi demanded that the two universities forsake their charters from the British government, refuse any further funding from the government, and become true national institutions. He explained his position in *Young India*:

> Aligarh is an old institution—forty-five years old. It has unique traditions. It has a great record behind it. It may claim to have given India the Ali brothers. It is the best-known centre of Islamic Culture in India. Why do I seek to destroy it? Some Mussalmans easily think that I mean ill under the pretence of wishing well to Aligarh. Little do they know that I am imploring Panditji to do to the Hindu University what I am asking the trustees to do to Aligarh, and I am certainly going to plead with the Benares students as earnestly as I have with the Aligarh boys. I have done the same with the Khalsa College. The latter is the only centre of Sikh culture. I do desire passionately to destroy all these three institutions as they are, and would strive to raise purer and truer ones instead. I deny that these institutions are in any way representative of their respective cultures.[36]

Though there was a measure of struggle for control of the universities, especially at Aligarh, where the Ali Brothers attempted a major takeover of the newly formed University, neither of the universities fell before Gandhi's wishes. When the boycott of the universities failed to close or convert them, the followers of Gandhi attempted to establish alternative national institutions, which would serve to replace both AMU and BHU. In Aligarh, the Ali Brothers and their associates started an independent

34 Ibid., p. 51.
35 Gandhi in *Young India*, 27 Oct 1920, cited in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 18, p. 378.
36 Ibid.

'Muslim National University', Jamia Millia Islamia, and in Banaras, efforts to initiate nationalist education along the lines called for by Gandhi led to the creation of Kashi Vidyapith.

Gandhi spoke at the opening of the Kashi Vidyapith on 10 February 1921. Gandhi opened his speech with regrets that Pandit Malaviya had refused to attend the ceremony but that it was his intent to make Pandit Malaviya's BHU his own institution or to destroy it:

> There is in my heart a sorrow that I cannot hide from you. Before I came here I went to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and asked him if he would attend this ceremony. He said no, it would be better for him not to. It is needless to tell you how close he is to me. Today he is not here with us. I cannot describe to you how sad it makes me not to see him here. But our struggle is such that we have to put up with such sorrow . . . . Babu Bhagavan Das has in very sweet words told us that ours is a righteous struggle. I have not the slightest doubt that it is so. Else I would never think of destroying an institution whose life-breath is Malaviya. My heart says that it should either become mine or cease to be. I deem it not a sin to act in this way.[37]

BHU, which had lost only a few of its students to the boycott movement of 1920–1, stayed its course. The University was buffeted again in the early 1930s with more serious consequences. At that time Gandhi was successful in persuading many students to boycott the University and to join the Non-cooperation Movement. The University was at times in danger of closure, but Pandit Malaviya managed to keep its doors open.[38] When the University closed due to intense picketing and boycotts, it did so only briefly. Classes continued, commencements were held yearly, and the University grew. It was only during the 1942 Quit India Movement that the University was closed for an extended period, though not due to students voluntarily giving up their studies. At that time the British Indian army locked the University gates.[39]

ANSWERING GANDHI'S CALL TO BOYCOTT

In Banaras, the first attempt to follow Gandhi's call for national education was tenuous. Gandhi had not initiated a specific plan for the education of the students leaving their studies at BHU. There was no alternative

37 Gandhi at speech at founding of Kashi Vidyapith, Banaras, 10 Feb. 1921, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.19, pp. 348–9.
38 Chaturvedi, *Madan Mohan Malaviya*, pp. 64–5.
39 See Chapter 7.

nationalist institution. There was no planned curriculum for nationalist studies. The students who complied with Gandhi's call for boycott found that they had nowhere to go. The local Congress leaders were not prepared to start an educational institution immediately. The leaders told the students that they did not know from where the necessary funds would come. Four or five days after the students had left their studies at BHU, some just went home. Those remaining approached J. B. Kripalani, their teacher at BHU, who was in favour of the boycott, for advice on what they should do. The students were still living in BHU hostels, even though they were no longer attending classes. Kripalani told them that the first thing they should do was to leave the hostels and 'not put a strain on the generosity of Pandit Malaviya, who as a national leader would not drive them away if they did not leave the hostels.'[40]

Kripalani asked the students to search for a house where they could all live. By the evening of the same day the students found a house and shifted their belongings. Kripalani moved to the house, designated it as a Gandhian ashram and began to lecture the students on political science, economics, and history. The group had very little money. Kripalani only had his last pay-cheque. He advised the students, who had lived on thirty rupees a month at BHU to ask their parents for only five rupees a month. On that amount they survived for sometime. In cooperation with the Congress program for khadi production, the small group had charkhas made and tried to popularize them in Banaras by spinning themselves.[41]

Kripalani had an idea that the students could make money by starting a national school for younger children. The boys who had left BHU were undergraduates and graduates and were capable of teaching. Kripalani's students approached the parents of young boys attending government schools in Banaras. The parents were asked to send their children to the national school, called the Gandhi School, where the fees would be half that of the government schools. As the school did not have chairs or benches, the children would have to bring *kusha* grass mats on which to sit. At first some thirty schoolboys came and then the number increased. Kripalani lived on the school fees and bought blackboards, maps, and some books.[42] Like most students, even in government-aided schools, the boys, as well as teachers of the Gandhi School tried to wear khaddar as much as possible, at least during the hours they were in school.[43]

40 J.B. Kripalani, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library, p. 151.
41 Ibid., p. 151.
42 Ibid., p. 153.
43 Manmathnath Gupta, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library, p. 15.

Manmathnath Gupta, who as a boy had left the Bengal Tola School to join Kripalani's Gandhi School, related the differences between his former school and the Gandhi school:

> The first thing was that we could not get good textbooks. That was the difficulty. The teachers started explaining everything to us in a nationalistic way. That means when they would teach history, they would say that in the past we had been great. In geography also, in everything, they did the same.[44]

The teachers made a start of interpreting subjects in a nationalist fashion. But as yet there was no established curriculum or books. Beside the problem of the lack of teaching materials, there was also a lack of teachers. Former BHU students, who were teaching would disappear without giving any explanation. Gupta explained that most of BHU students who left their studies to join the Non-cooperation Movement with Kripalani were not steadfast, 'There were very few students who stuck to their guns. Generally, if a hundred students came out of their institutions, only three or four remained till the end.'[45] The Gandhi school functioned haphazardly, with few resources and teachers constantly taking leave of their duties.

Students and teachers left the school for various reasons. One of the students who had followed Kripalani out of BHU, Manoranjan Prasad Sinha, was so impressed with the beatific smile of Pandit Malaviya while being taunted by Kripalani and his students at a railway station, that he later returned to BHU and became one of Pandit Malaviya's favourite professors.[46] Gupta believed that the reason many students left was because they joined the movement without fully understanding the movement; they were only swayed by a few slogans. He explained, 'At that time I did not understand anything. At that time there were few slogans like "*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*" and "*Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai*". That was all. "*Inquilab Zindabad*", etc. came later on. Boys were swept off their feet by slogans, but they did not stick because of influences.'[47] Even the famous Hindi writer, Prem Nath, who taught geography at the Gandhi School, left suddenly and no one really knew why. Gupta surmised, 'Probably he did not want to wear khaddar all the time or some other small thing. He did not want to toe the line.'[48] Despite the problems involved

44 Ibid., p. 13.
45 Ibid., p. 6.
46 Parmanand, *Mahamana*, p. 570.
47 Manmathnath Gupta, p. 6.
48 Ibid.

in starting a school without adequate funds and a reliable staff, Kripalani was able to keep the school open and to keep a small band of student non-cooperators together who were dedicated to the movement.

In 1921, when the Prince of Wales was invited by Pandit Malaviya to come to BHU to dedicate the new buildings of the Nagwa campus, Kripalani and some of his students distributed pamphlets calling for a boycott of the Prince's visit. The boycott, called by Gandhi, was almost a complete success; very few students attended the reception. For their efforts Kripalani and his boys were arrested and spent six months in jail. When the group was released, Kripalani divided the boys into two groups of fifteen. One group was to continue teaching at the school. The other was to visit villages and promote spinning and the production of khadi. Manmathnath Gupta, as a student of the Gandhi School, went with Kripalani's group to do work among the villagers during the summer vacation. He tells of the work of the group in the villages:

> We went with our books to make members, four *anna* members of the Congress and preached very ordinary things like, 'You should use *Swadeshi* clothes'; we told the villagers about the Khilafat wrongs and we used to talk about the Punjab massacre. These two, three things we used to explain. We ourselves did not know much. But this was enough for the villagers . . . . The thing is this. Today if a thirteen year old lad were to go to a village, and preach something I don't think it would have any impact at all, but those days were different times. People were completely ignorant . . . . We made some Congress members and we preached against the caste system. Generally when we went to villages, we tried to be the guests of people who were born of a low caste. In reality only low caste people invited us more. The *zamindars* being the allies of the government looked down upon us, and they did not want to be associated with us. So that way I think we did good work. At least people started saying, 'Yes, see these are educated people. They have come to us.' They thought us very highly educated.[49]

The dedicated student volunteers followed their teacher when he joined Kashi Vidyapith in 1921. The foundation of the Vidyapith was the answer to the need of a viable means of providing an alternative national education. Kripalani, who was asked to be the vice-principal, accepted the post with the condition that he and his students should be allowed to live apart on the campus of the Vidyapith so that they could continue to live the ashram life.[50]

49 Ibid., pp. 17–18.
50 Kripalani, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library, p. 157.

THE VIDYAPITH

The foundation of Kashi Vidyapith was the response to Gandhi's call for national education by leading Congressmen in Banaras. Bhagavan Das, with the help of funding from Shiv Prasad Gupta, started the national institute of higher education in Banaras. The task of organizing the nationalist institution fell almost naturally to Bhagavan Das, a scholar, educationalist, and President of the District Congress Committee in Banaras. He, along with Annie Besant, had envisioned and founded the Central Hindu School as a national college, free of government support and influence. Bhagavan Das was in full agreement with Gandhi's call to boycott any government-aided institution.

When circumstances led Bhagavan Das and Annie Besant to make a gift of their college to Pandit Malaviya as the nucleus of the new University, it was under the assumption that both of them would continue to play a role in the shaping of the University. Both Bhagavan Das and Annie Besant were members of the ruling body of BHU, the University Court. When Gandhi called for the boycott of education, Bhagavan Das brought a resolution before the Court asking that the University agree to forfeit its charter and all government funds. There was a heated debate in the Court. Shiv Prasad Gupta, a constant friend and supporter of Pandit Malaviya was present as a member of the Court. From the time of the founding of the university, Shiv Prasad had been against the acceptance of government funds and the use of English as the medium of instruction. He was solidly in support of Bhagavan Das' resolution. Annie Besant, though, was on the side of Pandit Malaviya; she introduced an amendment to the resolution that so weakened it that Shiv Prasad Gupta and Bhagavan Das were defeated in the Court. As both men had also disagreed with Pandit Malaviya on the issue of non-Brahmans not being allowed to teach in the College of Theology, they found themselves in the position of being the ones to establish a national college in Banaras that would be operated along lines that suited them. The Vidyapith accepted no grants from the Government of India. Shiv Prasad Gupta, a fervent supporter of Hindi, funded the institution, which had Hindi as its medium. Bhagavan Das became the first principal of the Vidyapith. The two men, together with Dr Rajendra Prasad, Acharya Narendra Dev, and Dr Sampurnanand, created Kashi Vidyapith.

Shiv Prasad Gupta, who provided funds for the founding of Kashi Vidyapith, came from a wealthy zamindar family of Banaras, was well known for his philanthropy and devotion to the nationalist cause. As a

young man, he had been a revolutionary, but had been persuaded by Gandhi to give up his violent activities. Shiv Prasad donated generously to the Congress, but shunned drawing attention to himself, choosing to do his good works behind the scenes. He served as Treasurer of the Congress for many years. Shiv Prasad was also a close friend of Pandit Malaviya. Throughout Malaviya's days at BHU, all of his personal food was the gift of Shiv Prasad. He also gave generously to the University and, as mentioned earlier, was a member of the Court, though he disagreed on the compromises of accepting government aids and using English as the medium of instruction. He was an avid supporter of Hindi, starting the Jnan Mandal Press for the advancement of Hindi literature, as well as the daily Hindi newspaper, *Aaj*. Shiv Prasad Gupta was deeply concerned about the establishment of national educational institutions un-aided by the government. He felt that the existing institutions produced men capable only of serving as clerks in the bureaucracy of the Raj. He saw a need for highly educated men with independent minds to lead India to freedom. After Gandhi called for the boycott of British institutions, Gupta approached him with the plan of starting an institution in Banaras a national institution that would provide university-level education using Hindi as the medium of instruction. Gandhi approved the plan. Shiv Prasad financed the new institution, but refused to take any credit for his deed. Earlier, Shiv Prasad's brother had died, leaving him as the sole heir to the family fortune, which was valued around two million rupees. He announced that he had no right to his dead brother's money and put half of his property in trust in his brother's name. The interest on the trust, which was valued around forty thousand rupees a year, was to go to the establishment and maintenance of the new national institution, Kashi Vidyapith.[51]

In what ways was education at Kashi Vidyapith to be different from that received at government institutions and BHU? The chief requirements for Gandhi's national education was that no government funds be accepted and that the medium of instruction be Hindi. But Kashi Vidyapith was most known for the nationalistic fervour and sacrificial spirit of its low-paid teachers. As Gyanchand explained, 'Another feature was its austerity. The teachers in the Hindu University were not overpaid, but the salaries in the Vidyapith were even lower.'[52] The institution was

51 C. P. Srivastava, *Lal Bahadur Shastri: A Life of Truth in Politics* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 24.

52 Gyanchand, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library.

small, being first housed in a small rented building. There were few students and facilities, and few books in the library, but the patriotic spirit of the teachers was intense and created an atmosphere vibrant with the excitement of the national movement. As one student related, 'Men like Acharya Narendra Dev and Dr Sampurnanand were among the other teachers. The quality of these men did create an atmosphere. Their sacrifices, their devotion, and the quality of their personality and mind did create an atmosphere that was stimulating.'[53] The number of students in each class was small, giving the students opportunity to interact closely with their teachers in debates and discussions. The teachers were a great influence on the students in inspiring them to sacrifice themselves to the nationalist cause. Sampurnanand, who taught philosophy and international law at Kashi Vidyapith, explained that the chief difference between the Vidyapith and other government-funded institutions was that the teachers of the Vidyapith were Congressmen imbued with the desire to go to jail'.[54]

J. B. Kripalani, who had already been to jail for several months for his part in the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales to BHU, taught at Kashi Vidyapith for several months and served as the vice principal. The students whom Kripalani had brought with him from BHU lived with him according to an ashram lifestyle. After some time, the students told their teacher that they were no longer interested in studies, and wanted to work in villages for the nationalist cause. Apparently, with no framed curriculum, students of other national vidyapiths also took up the work of teaching Hindi, spinning, weaving, and village work.[55] With Kripalani's permission the group continued to live in their small ashram in the Vidyapith, but travelled out to villages and promoted khadi. Kripalani related how the former BHU students slowly learned weaving:

> We also introduced weaving in our ashram. But as we put the yarn in the weaving loom, the yarn broke. We did not know the technique. Then we were advised that the yarn had got to be first put in some kind of solution of rice and water to make it strong. That is how, slowly and slowly some of use learnt weaving. This is how the ashram grew. We now exclusively confined ourselves to khadi and village work.[56]

53 Ibid.
54 Sampurnanand, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library, pp. 25–6.
55 Parmanand, *Mahamana*, p. 542.
56 J. B. Kripalani, Oral Histories Transcript, p. 158.

Kripalani's Gandhi Ashram prospered and grew. Branches and stores that sold khadi products were opened in many cities. The original students who had left BHU with Kripalani in answer to Gandhi's boycott were the directors, under Kripalani's direction of the very large undertaking of the Gandhi Ashram.[57]

Kashi Vidyapith had been founded in hope of drawing students away from BHU. Boys from other government-aided schools also joined the vidyapith. Lal Bahadur Shastri left a government-aided school to join Kripalani's student volunteers and received his Shastri degree (the equivalent of a Bachelor of Arts degree) at Kashi Vidyapith.[58] Before attending Kashi Vidyapith, Lal Bahadur, who came from a family with no nationalist leanings, was well taught in nationalist thought at the government-aided Harish Chandra High School. As Lal Bahadur's biographer explains, one of Lal Bahadur's teachers was devoted to imparting nationalist fervour in his students:

> Nishkameshwar Misra, who was immensely patriotic, undertook now to instill in some of his chosen pupils deep feelings of love and devotion for the motherland. After the regular classes he held a class each day to talk about India's ancient heritage and fabulous prosperity before the British invasion. He would recall in detail how the British subjugated India, how they decimated its flourishing industries, and how ruthlessly they exploited the peasantry. He would enthral his pupils by recalling Maharana Pratap and Chhatrapati Shivaji, and describe in detail the endeavours of Gokhale, Surendranth Bannerji, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghose and others who had promoted India's recent political renaissance. He told his students of the role of Indian newspapers in building up a sense of nationalism among the educated classes, and of the nobility and courage of those who had worked to establish the Indian National Congress as a forum for India's political advancement towards swaraj. Mother India, he would say, needed new young soldiers for the ongoing freedom struggle.[59]

Despite having the opportunity for exposure to nationalist thought at the government-aided school, Lal Bahadur left his school in obedience to Gandhi's boycott. Lal Bahadur's family, like the families of many young men who quit school to follow Gandhi, was displeased with his decision to abandon his duty to study, obtain a job and support his widowed mother. Lal Bahadur, together with his friends T. N. Singh, Rajaram, and Algurai,

57 Ibid.
58 C. P. Srivastava, *Lal Bahadur Shastri,* pp. 22–5.
59 Ibid., p. 19.

applied for admission to Kashi Vidyapith. Though the boys had not taken their intermediate exams normally required for admission to BA studies, they were given a special exam at Kashi Vidyapith and admitted to the four-year *Shastri* course. Like Lal Bahadur, other students, especially those who had attended BHU, also entered the Vidyapith already well versed in nationalism even though they had attended schools supported by British education. There were also students attending the Vidyapith who had left the institutions in Banaras that were most untouched by westernization, the traditional Sanskrit schools in Banaras. Manmathnath Gupta, who as a boy had left the Bengal Tola School to join Kripalani's Gandhi School, was one of the youths to follow Kripalani to the Kashi Vidyapith. In an interview, Gupta answered a question concerning the impact of the Non-cooperation Movement on the students in Banaras by explaining that it was the Sanskrit students in Banaras who most readily gave up their studies for the Non-cooperation Movement:

> It was very peculiar in Banaras. The Sanskrit students, that means, those who read only Sanskrit, were a class by themselves. Even now in Banaras that class exists. They are given free meals in the *kshetras*, i.e. religious boarding houses; they get free boarding and lodging there. These students were the first to react and respond to Gandhi's call. Chandra Shekhar Azad belonged to this class. He had come from his far away village home to study Sanskrit. He was one of the first-Non-cooperators.[60]

The boys, like Chandra Shekhar Azad, who already had a measure of higher education before entering Kashi Vidyapith, proved to be most able students. When Sampurnanand was asked about the standard of education at the Kashi Vidyapith, he said that the standard was very good, but that the best students of the Vidyapith were those of the first two batches of students, who had already studied in colleges before coming to the Vidyapith. Among them were Chandra Shekhar Azad, Lal Bahadur Shastri, T. N. Singh, Algurai Shastri, Kamlapati Tripathi, and Rajaram Shastri.[61] As Gyanchand writes, from the academic standpoint, the Kashi Vidyapith did not achieve much, but 'it was not in its achievement but in its promise that Kashi Vidyapith was taken as a new departure.'[62]

Lacking a standard national curriculum, how did national education differ from government schools academically? A teacher who taught at BHU and at Gujarat Vidyapith, Valji Govinda Desai, said in interview

60 Manmathnath Gupta, Oral Histories Transcript, p. 5.
61 Sampurnanand, Oral Histories Transcript, p. 28.
62 Gyanchand, Oral Histories Transcript.

that he found there to be practically no difference between the two. The only two exceptions were that students of the vidyapith were expected to be preparing themselves to fight in the struggle for independence, and that the spinning wheel was introduced.[63] Sampurnanand, who taught at Kashi Vidyapith, agreed that there was very little difference between Kashi Vidyapith and the other government-funded institutions. The subjects were the same. The books used for various subjects were the same as those used in government institutions. There were as yet few text-books available written from a nationalist perspective. The subject that lent itself most readily to the spirit of national education was history.[64] The teachers themselves made up for the lack of teaching material and created their own version of nationalist history. As J. B. Kripalani explained, the teachers had to improvise. J. B. Kripalani, who taught at Kashi Vidyapith, was invited by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to teach for some time at the Gujarat Vidyapith in 1923. Kripalani said to his interviewer about teaching history:

Sharma: Could you tell us what books, in addition to those prescribed for government or government-aided schools—you read and then taught the students and what was your point of view so far as history was concerned?

Kripalani: About history, which I taught, I consulted various books and did not confine myself to the prescribed textbooks.

Sharma: In the teaching of history what was your emphasis on, when you taught?

Kripalani: Talking about the British period in history, I pointed out how the British have occupied India. It was by intrigue, fraud, by setting one Indian Prince against another. I pointed out to them that the Indian soldiers were the better fighters than the British Tommies. But they lack discipline. India was conquered not by the British Tommies but by our own soldiers. As a matter of fact we handed over the country to the British on a platter.[65]

As Sampurnanand, who taught at Kashi Vidyapith, pointed out, it was not just a matter of interpretation of facts, it was also a matter of the narration of facts: 'An Indian approaching Indian history from his point of view would give different facts.' The revolt of 1857 was no longer a mutiny, but a national rebellion. Instead of regurgitating British claims of the civilizing influence of the Raj, the British drain theory was

63 V. G. Desai, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library, p. 8.
64 Gyanchand, Oral Histories Transcript.
65 J. B. Kripalani, Oral Histories Transcript, p. 159.

emphasized. The role of Akbar and Asoka as builders of the nation was vividly brought out.[66] The subject of history, as a powerful vehicle of national sentiment received the most attention from students at the Vidyapith. As described by one teacher, the subject of history at Kashi Vidyapith as 'militantly nationalistic.'[67] Other subjects, too, were influenced by nationalist ideas. For instance, as Gyanchand points out, the economics taught at Kashi Vidyapith was Gandhian economics:

> Gandhian economics, that means that in economics the approach was Gandhian—*khadi*, the meaning of *khadi*, the aim of creating a new society which could grow out of the implementation of Gandhian ideals and what were the means and measures which had to be adopted in order to create that society. That was probably the only distinctive feature of teaching economics.[68]

While certain subjects could be interpreted in a nationalist manner, apparently science was not among them and was largely neglected at the Vidyapith. Technological courses of study, which were the pride of BHU, were also missing, but apparently by design. Parmanand wrote that 'Gandhi's cult of Khaddar and Charkha implied a dislike of higher education which was one of the cherished objects of Malaviya's ambition.'[69] The education offered at the Kashi Vidyapith followed the lines necessary to indoctrinate young men into their roles in the national movement.

National education at the vidyapiths was not a finely orchestrated attempt to revamp higher education in India. As has been suggested, the subjects included in vidyapith education were the same as those in government colleges and universities. Often the same textbooks were used in the vidyapiths, with the teachers doing what they could in their lectures to give the material a nationalist bent. The scheme of education was basically the same as government institutions, with the exception of the neglect of science as a subject. The vidyapiths did not distinguish themselves in offering instruction in traditional Indian subjects. There was no improved Sanskrit education for the Sanskrit students who had been first in leaving their studies in Banaras to join the Non-cooperation Movement. The emphasis at the vidyapiths was not on fine scholarship and academic excellence. As admitted by its teachers, the Kashi Vidyapith accomplished little academically; its most academically successful stu-

66 Gyanchand, Oral Histories Transcript.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Parmanand, *Mahamana,* Vol. 2, p. 560.

dents were those who had already been students in other colleges. The national institutions had been established simultaneously with Gandhi's call to boycott government-funded institutions. The vidyapiths, created as alternative institutions for India's college students, were a means of drawing students away from the established universities and into the Non-cooperation Movement. The goal of the vidyapiths was not to produce well-educated men, but freedom fighters.

The de-emphasization of literary education at the vidyapiths was in correspondence with Gandhi's ideas of education. Valji Govinda Desai, who taught both at BHU and at the Gujarat Vidyapith explained that there was very little difference between the vidyapiths and government colleges, but that this was because the leaders of the vidyapiths did not act in full conformity with Gandhi's wishes. According to Desai, it was Gandhi's wish that the students of the vidyapiths devote their entire day to spinning khadi. Desai, as a young Congress volunteer had attended the foundation ceremonies of BHU with Gandhi and heard Gandhi's speech that was interrupted by Annie Besant. Desai left Gandhi's company as he did not like taking numerous orders from Gandhi, one of which was to translate Tolstoy's work, *What is Art*, into Gujarati.[70] After leaving Gandhi's service, he secured a position as an English teacher at the Central Hindu College of BHU in 1920. The following year Desai joined Gandhi's *Young India* office as assistant to the editor. Because of petty disagreements at the office between Desai and another staff worker, Gandhi placed Desai as professor of Sanskrit and English in Gujarat Vidyapith for six months in 1922. The interviewer for the Nehru Memorial Library Oral Histories Project, Hari Dev Sharma, asked Desai to explain the difference between the education given in the Gujarat Vidyapith and the education that was imparted in government schools and colleges:

Desai: In those days, there was no difference at all really. The same subjects were taught, in the same way.

Sharma: Then, what was the utility of keeping Gujarat Vidyapith?

Desai: That is, students were expected to prepare themselves for participation in the struggle.

Sharma: But that is a big difference!

Desai: Yes, but that was all the difference.

70 V. G. Desai, Oral Histories Transcript. Nehru Memorial Library, p. 8.

Sharma: Don't you think that in Gujarat Vidyapith much emphasis was laid on service to the country and simple living, and much information was given about one's own country?

Desai: I do not think so. They were there, of course, for the service of the country. The students knew it.

Sharma: But apart from that, you did not find any differences between the government run schools and colleges and Gujarat Vidyapith?

Desai: No, no; spinning was introduced, because Gandhi wanted to finish the boycott of foreign cloth during 1921 itself, and he even wished that the students would suspend all other studies whatever and do spinning the whole day for all eight hours. But that was not done—and he was not satisfied with the attention given by those institutions to this constructive program, so that after some time, he said, he had committed a mistake in allowing these institutions to teach all the old subjects in the old way: he should have asked them from the very first to spin all the eight hours, for, in that case, his boycott would have been fully successful.[71]

According to Desai, apart from the fact that students in the Vidyapith were expected to be preparing themselves for participation in the struggle for independence, the only other difference between government education and national education was the introduction of spinning by Gandhi. Gandhi had allowed the creation of the Vidyapiths as an alternative to university education, but thought that it was a mistake for the students to study the same subjects as taught in colleges. He would have preferred the students to spin all day. Gandhi did not see much use for an education based upon the knowledge gained from books. Gandhi wrote of textbooks, 'Of text-books of which we hear so much, I never felt the want. I do not remember having made much use of the books which were available. I do not find it necessary to load the boys with quantities of books.'[72] Gandhi's ideal scheme of education for India, called Basic Education, which called for a seven-year course of compulsory education for all Indian children in which the essentials of education would be imparted by means of manual labor instead of books.[73] While Gandhi's ideas on education were never fully implemented in the vidyapiths, they were put into actual practice at Gandhi's ashrams.

71 Ibid., pp.19–20.

72 M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Trust, 1927), p. 281.

73 Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, p. 302.

GANDHI'S ASHRAM EDUCATION

It was in Gandhi's ashrams that he was able to most fully bring his ideas into reality. In his Sabarmati and Sevagram ashrams, Gandhi undertook the question of education very seriously. According to Judith Brown, it was in the village context of the ashram at Sevagram that Gandhi thought out his ideas of Basic Education. While Gandhi did not fully enforce the disciplined practice of his ideas at Sevagram, life at the Sabarmati ashram offered a model of Gandhi's beliefs, educational and otherwise. The constitution of the ashram was drawn up in 1915. The following is taken from Judith Brown's summary of the constitution:

> The primary vows of truth and non-violence were to be buttressed by vows of celibacy (even for married couples) and self-denial over food in keeping with Gandhi's personal experience of the manner of life which fortified the truth-seeker in his pilgrimage and his commitment to non-violence. A total commitment to simplicity and sufficiency as opposed to unnecessary consumption was enshrined in vows of non-stealing and non-possession. . . . A Spartan life-style was laid down, and the daily time-table from 4.00 am to 10.00 pm presupposed morning and evening prayers and considerable stretches of time for manual labour, specifically work on the land and hand-weaving, as well as the routine domestic work of cooking, cleaning and drawing water.[74]

The code of rules and regulations was to be followed by all who entered the ashram, adults and children alike. Adherence to the rules of the ashram, as well as to the wishes of the leaders was required of members living in the ashram, young and old. Failure to do so resulted in penance fasting, Gandhi's method of punishment.

The disciplined atmosphere of Gandhi's ashrams seemed extreme to some visitors. Even Shiv Prasad Gupta, who financed Kashi Vidyapith in accordance with Gandhi's wishes, complained that Gandhi was much too strict at the ashrams. He did not like the fact that when he visited the ashram, he was not allowed to put up a mosquito net. Gandhi had forbidden mosquito nets because all netting was made in mills. And in the ashram, Gandhi's word was law.[75] Every aspect of life in the ashrams was made to conform to the ideal. Falling away from the prescribed

74 Ibid., p. 100

75 Sashwat Vikram Gupta, great-grandson of Shiv Prasad Gupta, in interview with author, Banaras, November 1997, reported that Gandhi did not keep his own rule. According to Shiv Prasad, the only mosquito net in the ashram was Gandhi's. Gandhi said that he had the duty to use the mosquito net as it was the gift of a devoted follower.

lifestyle in any manner was a matter for alarm on the part of the ashram leaders. Personal relationships, even marriage, were not outside the jurisdiction of ashram authority.

In Gandhi's ashrams, the tight restraints imposed upon adults were also extended to the school children of the ashrams. Giridhari Kripalani, a nephew of J. B. Kripalani, attended school in Sabarmati Ashram. Giridhari wrote that the atmosphere was much more restrictive that Tagore's school at Santiniketan, where he had previously been a student. When boys did not abide by the set restrictions, such as not playing western games, the use of penance fasts were imposed upon them. Giridhari tells of what happened when the boys wanted to start playing cricket at the ashram:

> The boys among themselves raised subscriptions and bought a cricket set and started playing. I distinctly remember that I had obtained permission of Naraharibhai Parikh who was in charge of games. But it seems *Ashram* management raised objection to introducing an English game. And suddenly I learnt Naraharibhai was fasting as a penance against this lapse of mine. He said, 'You have contravened my instructions.' So I was at my wits end and I begged him to break his fast, promising not to play the game again in the *Ashram.* The game was discontinued, and we gave away all the equipment to somebody.[76]

Giridhari explained that fasts were undertaken regularly as a way of disciplining the boys and forcing them to conform to ashram rules as when a teacher fasted against him because Giridhari complained about having to perform the religious ritual of taking predawn bath in the river even in the cold of winter.[77]

Gandhi believed that students are best taught in a disciplined environment, where knowledge is gained through the students' interaction with worthy teachers and through manual labour. Gandhi wrote that teachers should undertake penance fasting when misbehavior on the part of students called for drastic measures. The practice of penance fasting for the sake of maintaining a well-disciplined atmosphere in the ashram was part of Gandhi's larger educational scheme. The students had to abide by the rules of the ashram and give their respective obedience to their teachers. They adhered to a fixed schedule, rising early in the morning to say obligatory prayers. The students were not allowed to be shirkers. At the ashrams, manual labour required of both adults and students.

76 Giridhari Kripalani, Oral History Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library.
77 Ibid.

As the use of khadi figured prominently in Gandhi's ideas of how to win political independence, the ashram members were expected to learn the skill and spin daily, or to participate in some other aspect of the weaving. Giridhari Kripalani described the emphasis on manual labour, especially that having to do with the manufacture of khadi in the daily schedule of young students of the ashram:

> We got up in the morning, attended the prayer meetings at 4 o'clock and after prayer you set about cleaning the premises and then at 8 o'clock you were at the charkha or at the loom or at the carding machine or at silver making or at soap making or carpentry or whatever.[78]

Khadi production required spinning for hours on end to produce only a small amount of yarn. First cotton had to be run through carding machines to make cotton slivers. Then the cotton slivers were spun on the spinning wheel to make yarn.[79] Hours of spinning produced only a short strand of yarn. As J. B. Kripalani and his students had learned in the Gandhi ashram in Banaras, the yarn then had to be soaked in a solution of rice and water. The yarn then needed to be woven on a handloom into cloth. The production of a small amount of khadi cloth took a great deal of time and labour, which was provided by both the adults, and students of the ashram.

At the ashrams, time spent in the production of khadi was a major avenue of learning for the students according to Gandhi's concept of education. In addition to performing manual labour, the young members of the ashram were also required at times to go about soliciting funds for the ashram as part of their education. They left early in the morning and spent the day asking for donations. Giridhari Kripalani, the nephew of J. B. Kripalani, said he and another student of the ashram collected about 15,000 rupees a month. While the students were influenced and instructed by the teachers of the ashram on various topics, there was little formal schooling in the ashrams. There was no regular classroom instruction and there were no textbooks. Giridhari told his interviewer that the only schooling he really received was when he was arrested for participation in non-cooperation activities and was sent to a British reform school, 'Reformatory,' Giridhari recalled, 'became in a sense a real school for the detenues, in as much as a number of classes were con-

78 Giridhari Kripalani, in interview with Hari Dev Sharma, 30 July 1974, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library.

79 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 410.

ducted there regularly and lectures on various subjects were organised off and on.'[80] Gandhi's ideas were based in part on the rustic idealism of John Ruskin and Tolstoy, both of whom held the peasant and manual labour in high esteem. Gandhi thought that education in India should also remain very close to the earth. He argued that western style education alienated Indian youth from the rural citizenry of India; it lacked spiritual content, and turned out graduates whose ambition was only to obtain the security of possessing a job.[81]

Gandhi established his first school at the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa, where he formulated educational methods that he thought sufficed for his children and would also do so for other children. He wrote, 'I have tried myself or through others to impose my educational "fads" on other children'.[82] Gandhi gave first place to the building of character, which he believed children imbibed from being with their parents twenty-four hours a day. If character was established, Gandhi wrote, 'children could learn all the other things themselves or with the assistance of friends.'[83] Gandhi never allowed his own children to go to public schools. He believed that 'under ideal conditions, true education should be imparted by the parents.'[84] None of his children passed even the intermediate exams, for which Gandhi had no regrets, though his children themselves later felt handicapped by a lack of education.[85] Due to a lack of time to devote to his children, Gandhi sent them to an improvised school, which he started, for children of *satyagrahi* parents in South Africa. Gandhi later assumed the role of teacher at the Tolstoy School. He wrote that the students had some classes for literary training. For spiritual training, Gandhi had the students memorize and recite hymns. He also read them books on moral training. For physical training, the students did routine chores around the farm. The students gardened, dug pits, chopped wood, and lifted loads and as Gandhi explained, 'They took delight in work, and so they did not need any other exercise or games.'[86] Gandhi believed that every child should learn a manual vocation and taught shoemaking, carpentry, and cooking to the students of the Tolstoy Farm. Discipline consisted of penance fasting on the part of the teacher.

80 Giridhari Kripalani, Oral Histories Transcript.
81 See Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, p. 302.
82 M. K. Gandhi, *Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 168.
83 Ibid., p. 279.
84 Ibid., p. 278.
85 Ibid., p. 167.
86 Ibid., p. 168.

Gandhi explained that the education method that he developed in South Africa for his own children and students was the model he presented for the university students in 1920.

Gandhi's version of education, if it had been fully applied in the vidyapiths, would have been the equivalent of non-education. While vidyapith students gave much of their time to spinning and to political work in accordance with Gandhi's ideas, the teachers at the national institution, not convinced that higher education was unnecessary and detrimental, continued to try to provide some manner of a liberal education to their students. Due to lack of funds and facilities, as well as the priority given to political activism, the standard of education could not equal that of the British-supported universities, including BHU. As already mentioned, and to be more fully discussed in the following chapters, the fact that an educational institution was government-supported did not by any means rule out the possibility of students receiving a nationalist-oriented education. But the goal of Gandhi's boycott of education was total non-cooperation with the British. Gandhi wanted Indians to withdraw themselves from any reliance on the British. The boycott was meant both as a pressure tactic against the British and as a means of rousing the Indian public to break free of the status quo of life under British rule. Gandhi believed that the extraordinary step of calling for a boycott of the universities in the 1920s would bring students out from government-aided institutions, and would serve to mobilize those students for work in the freedom movement. Gandhi's emphasis in calling for the creation of national education was not to create institutions that would equal or surpass the government-aided institutions in academic achievement. Gandhi had no such plan. The focus of Gandhi's interest in national education was not fine-tuning the intellects of Indian youth. Neither did Gandhi promote training in all the fields necessary for the maintenance of a modern nation. The students in the nationalist vidyapiths were not trained in law, business, medicine, science, and the industrial arts. Neither was there an emphasis on reviving the traditional knowledge of India. The purpose of the national institutions in Gandhi's strategy was to indoctrinate students in nationalist thought so that they would serve as dedicated and self-sacrificing freedom fighters. It was Gandhi's desire that his radical attitudes toward education be implemented in the vidyapiths, but he was unable to convince the founders and staff of the institutions that they should totally abandon the subjects taught in government colleges. It would doubtless have been difficult to persuade students and their parents to leave the government-aided col-

leges and universities if the vidyapiths did not bear some semblance of engagement in a true educational endeavour. On part of the many who were involved in the establishment of the national institutions, such as Bhagavan Das and Shiv Prasad Gupta in Banaras, the educational effort was sincere. These men believed in the benefits of the intellectual endeavour of higher education. Gandhi, though, gave little credit to such 'book-learning', as he called it, and would rather have the students spend their days spinning and doing propaganda work in the villages. He never discouraged students who wanted to leave their studies completely and become Congress volunteers. Disagreeing with Pandit Malaviya that the youth of India should first spend a few years becoming educated and well-rounded citizens before becoming involved in active politics, Gandhi wanted students to be immediately mobilized for freedom-fighting. To him, university education was not necessary for independence, or for the future of the nation.

Gandhi's complaint against BHU was not that it was a Hindu university, but rather that the University was not Hindu enough. When Gandhi set out to destroy BHU, his criticism was that the University was not truly representative of Hindu culture.[87] Gandhi believed that the University, in using English as the medium of instruction, in receiving government money, and in providing an education based upon knowledge gained from books, was cooperating with the British oppression of Hindu culture. In many of Gandhi's speeches against British rule, he constructed vivid verbal images of a battle between good and evil using militant Hindu terminology. Repeated references to Rama and Ravana conjured up images of the epic battle of the Ramayana, in which Rama the righteous king slays the demon king Ravana and his hoards of demons. Gandhi appealed to the affection of Hindus for the beloved story of Rama in order to win them over to his political strategy against the British Raj, which he likened to the kingdom of Ravana. Gandhi accused Pandit Malaviya in public of voluntarily choosing to be a denizen of the evil kingdom of Ravana by not ending the University's official relationship with the Government of India. Gandhi was not opposed to mixing religion and politics, nor religion and education.

Gandhi's own ideas and practices were firmly imbedded in the Hindu tradition. From the beginning of his role as a national leader, Gandhi explained that he was not engaged in politics; he was 'introducing reli-

87 Gandhi in *Young India*, 27 Oct. 1920, cited in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 18, p. 378.

gion into politics.'[88] Gandhi claimed that his politics was based on religious truth. Gandhi's religious beliefs guided every aspect of the ashrams. In these communities of volunteer members, Gandhi sought to bring to reality his concept of an ideal community dedicated to truth and non-violence. As Gandhi believed that he had discovered a path to truth, life in the ashrams was to be organized around adherence to that path. People came to the ashrams in awe of Gandhi, and out of fondness for and devotion to him, they submitted themselves to the disciplined life, which he held was essential for all truth-seekers. The principle of self-sacrifice that was preached constantly by Gandhi, together with their love for Gandhi, inspired the members of the ashram to self-sacrifice and to submission to the higher truths Gandhi was teaching them.

The atmosphere of the ashram did not cater to nonconformity. Failure to keep the rules of the ashram, depending on the magnitude of the incident, resulted in gentle rebuke or the more extreme measure of penance fasting, meant to shame the disobedient into mending their ways. The ashrams, described even by devotees of Gandhi as being 'rigid and puritanical', even frighteningly so, did not lend themselves to intellectual caprice; they were established according to Gandhi's interpretation of a pure Hindu lifestyle. In Gandhi's ashrams, the daily prayer rituals, early morning ritual bathes in the river, the practice of *brahmacharya* (abstinence), rigid dietary rules including vegetarianism and fasting were recognized Hindu practices which were reinterpreted by Gandhi. It was a traditional Hindu belief, for instance, that abstinence was a duty of the yet unmarried young, whose duty it was to study the Vedas, and of the old, who having fulfilled their duties in life, were free to forsake the sensual world and to devote themselves fully to union with ultimate truth. Gandhi claimed that this was a misconception, and that people of all ages should seek the truth. Gandhi believed that abstinence enhanced truth seeking. Therefore, all members of the ashram, including married couples, were expected to practise it. Fasting, also, which was used commonly in Hindu tradition as a means of personal penance and of gaining spiritual and physical benefits, was reinterpreted as a means of disciplining others in the ashrams. While Hindu apologists often cite the flexibility of Hindu thought, in Gandhi's ashrams, where his ideas were able to come into fruition most fully, there was little leeway for freedom of thought and personal discretion in regard to opinions and behaviour. Gandhi's ashrams, which were meant to be ideal communities, were

88 Gandhi, as cited by Judith Brown in *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, p. 146.

religious and Hindu, but as defined by Gandhi. By contrast, the religious practice of BHU, discussed later in this study, was very lenient and practically non-existent.

Gandhi's positions were radically different from the liberal, democratic ideas which were attracting many Indian students. A student at BHU, who was an admirer of Gandhi's sacrifice for the country, was very wary of the outcome of Gandhi's proposed educational and social revolution. He saw not only danger, but also hypocrisy in Gandhi's teachings. He pointed out that there was a 'noble inconsistency' in Gandhi's writings against the importance of literary skills. The student wrote of Gandhi's teachings in his publication, *Young India*:

> In *Young India* of 17th July 1924 he writes: 'Divine knowledge is not borrowed from books. It has to be realized in oneself. Books are at best an aid, often even a hindrance.' It struck me as most extraordinary that in the Tolstoy Farm he attached least importance to the barest knowledge of letters. It would be futile to pursue this further. One cannot fail to see that the man is much greater than his teaching and no inconsistency can be nobler than his whereby he has read deeply not merely in Sanskrit and Hindi and Gujarati, but even in English; and not merely read, but written profusely, and on the whole the world has benefited by reading him and not shunning books.[89]

Gandhi, as the student pointed out, was not only well read, but used the written word to publicize his views. Gandhi wrote volumes and published his writings in his own periodicals including the *Young Indian*, to which the BHU student was referring. Yet, Gandhi thought it best to deny literary skills and books to children.

Gandhi envisioned an Indian society shorn of modern knowledge. The student wrote that Gandhi did not see benefit in even the most basic elements of a modern education.

> Here are some of his observations: What do you propose to do by giving him [a peasant] a knowledge of letters? Will you add an inch to his happiness? Now let us take higher education. I have learned geography, astronomy, geometry, etc. In what way have I benefited myself or those around me?[90]

In Gandhi's eyes, the study of such subjects was unnecessary, as were the fruits of such study. Gandhi was opposed even to bridges and binoculars,

89 A. R. Wadia, 'Mahatma Gandhi and His Philosophy', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 252.

90 Ibid, pp. 251–2. Wadia cites extracts from Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj,* Chap. 18, 'Education'.

the most innocent of modern devices because they offended his ascetic sensibilities:

> The whole discussion of machinery in Gandhiji's writings is dominated by a sullen silent spirit of asceticism, which has been a most peculiar feature of Hinduism . . . . He goes to Haridwar and is repelled by the iron bridge near Lakshman Jhula. Mr Kallenback and he were on board a ship on their way to London; Mr Kallenbach was fond of binoculars, but this militated against Gandhiji's sense of simplicity and to put an end to endless discussions, which these binoculars gave rise to, Gandhiji suggested and poor Mr. Kallenbach acquiesced that the binoculars should be thrown into the sea, and they were: the claims of simplicity were satisfied.[91]

Gandhi's vision for India, if put into effect, would effectively toss technological, scientific, and industrial development overboard. To the student, such a vision seemed like an attack on modern civilization:

> I now come to that part of Gandhji's teaching with which I disagree most and that relates to his view of modern civilization. In 1908 he wrote *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule*, which is a sustained attack on civilization as such . . . . A book written in bitterness is likely to suffer form defect and I should have preferred to ignore it, but unfortunately in the *Young India* of January 1921 he blesses it once again with the imprint of his approval, and on 14th August 1924 he affirms that the *Indian Home Rule* depicts an ideal state. So it is impossible to overlook it, however much I dislike it, and I dislike it because Gandhiji takes up the position not of a world teacher, but of a narrow nationalist, which would take India back some thousands of years.[92]

Gandhi's scheme of education was intimately connected to his plan for the ideal state. His use of manual training for school children would be the only education necessary for a non-technological state. Gandhi often referred to the ideal nation-state as 'Ram Raj,' an allusion to the kingdom of the righteous Lord Ram. If Gandhi's educational scheme was any indication of the ideal state, the signs were ominous. As the BHU student feared, Gandhi's ideas would take India back in time. To Gandhi, it would be a return to a more righteous past. To the BHU student, that idealized past was the equivalent of the Dark Ages.

Gandhi's complaint with BHU went beyond the refusal of Pandit Malaviya to comply with the educational boycott. The liberal education offered by the University did not correspond with Gandhi's ideas of a

91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., p. 250.

Hindu education. Gandhi had a problem with the whole concept of higher education. He saw little benefit in the education derived from books. His anti-technological stance saw no need for research and scientific advancement. His position was that the endeavour involved in higher education was a western import that alienated Indians from their culture and from their rural fellow-citizens. Gandhi brought forth an idea for basic education, the Wardha scheme, where all Indians would have seven years of schooling to acquire basic skills through manual training. He did not address education beyond that stage, except in his criticism of it. We can only surmise that Gandhi, who was inspired to revolutionary fervour by the likes of Ruskin, Tolstoy, and other intellectuals, had concluded that for the sake of a just and equalitarian society, higher education was not only unnecessary, it could be harmful. Education of responsible, productive citizens could be accomplished primarily by means of instruction in manual labour and in the child's natural conformity to the moral and ethical behaviour of parents and teachers in a disciplined atmosphere of self-sacrifice and devotion to truth.

If we follow Gandhi's line of thought in the direction it seems to lead, we arrive at the conclusion that secular education at the university level, where students ideally are exposed to a multiplicity of ideas constructed by both the religious and irreligious, taught to critically examine those ideas, and embrace, discard or improve upon the ideas, would not fit well into Gandhi's scheme. In the ongoing expedition of science, where a new discovery never reigns supreme for long, in the never-ending quest for better models and new modes of thought, in the production of books and books and more books, Gandhi's ideas of non-literary education would not sit well. Gandhi's ideas of education did not correspond with the common definitions of education. For educationalists such as Pandit Malaviya, Gandhi's ideas would seem almost ludicrous. On 14 December 1937, Pandit Malaviya, in the convocation address at Allahabad University called for a national policy of education, but referring to Gandhi's Wardha scheme of education, Pandit Malaviya said that such occupational instruction as was called for in the scheme, could begin only after eleven years of schooling.[93] But in Gandhi's scheme, the schooling would be absent. To Gandhi, sitting at the spinning wheel for hours on end in his alternative institutions were of more benefit to students than the study of books and the examination of ideas. Gandhi summed

93 Bhargava, *Hundred Years of Allahabad University*, p. 161

up the choice between his model of education and that of literary training, as that between 'liberty and learning'.[94]

It is likely that Gandhi's ideas on non-literary education would have brought about a drastically different perception of knowledge had he been allowed to live to see them fully implemented in the wider society outside his ashrams. As with many ideas, they remain ethereal and bright, untarnished by the harsh realities of practical implementation and testing. Gandhi's vision of an ideal society was undeniably religious and based upon traditions of asceticism. Gandhi not only called for a rejection of technology and science, but also for an end to intellectual endeavour. Gandhi's national education, if brought into reality, would have been a non-violent version of the Cultural Revolution. It is significant that it was a student of BHU who wrote an article criticizing Gandhi's aversion to literary education and technology.

Gandhi's ideas of education, his educational methods, and his vision for India provide a dramatic contrast to the education offered at BHU. The functioning of the nationalist vidyapiths, and to a greater extent, that of Gandhi's ashrams provide examples of how strikingly different manner of education could have been fostered at BHU. At the early vidyapiths, education in all subjects was strongly influenced by nationalist thought and was considered secondary to political volunteerism and manual labour. At the ashrams, austerity, discipline, and obedience were prerequisites for spinning, gardening, carpentry, and cleaning latrines. Students were required to participate in daily prayer rituals, early morning ritual bathes, the practice of brahmacharya, rigid vegetarian dietary rules, and fasting. Only the most basic of education was offered. Children learned to read, but they read religious hymns and books on moral training. Religion and nationalist politics were woven together in Gandhi's educational scheme. The operation of BHU was based on significantly different guidelines. Part Two, which follows, explores the institutional growth and the social, educational, and political life on the campus of BHU during its early years.

94 Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* p. 168.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

Taking the High Seat: Religious Authority and the Karmayoga *of Education at BHU*

The Banaras Hindu University, which was intended as a means to merge traditional religion with a modern institution of higher education, can be regarded as an experiment of Hindu revivalism. At the University, Pandit Malaviya and the other founders of the institution were free to put into practice their ideas on the proper education of Hindu youth in the modern context. The British officials and the ruling Indian princes, who wanted to guide the direction of religious revivalism according to their own devices, desired that religious instruction at the University should include lessons in loyalty to the government and good citizenship. There were also contending voices that supported varying degrees of traditional orthodoxy, religious reform, and nationalist Hinduism. In the midst of such diversity, what shape would religion take at the University?

During the decades preceding independence, the period covered by this study, when the efforts to bring about a 'Hindu Renaissance' were at their height, instituting Hinduism in a University environment presented particular challenges. In the academic setting, religious authority had to be established. There were attempts to produce a standardized textbook Hinduism that would conform to western notions of religion. Various means were tried to indoctrinate the students in a single vision of religion. The responses to these efforts, and the Hinduism that emerged at the University, were largely unanticipated and not always according to scheme.

It did not take long for the British to begin to doubt the wisdom of chartering the Hindu institution. Within a year of the creation of the University, it appeared that the plan to have the ruling princes function as the guiding influence was being foiled by the dominant position of Pandit Malaviya and his Brahman supporters at the University. The desire of the British to have the princes control the functioning of the University had been considered virtually guaranteed by both the generous

financial support of the princes, which could be withheld if the University fell into seditious hands, and by the membership of the princes and other loyalists in the University Court, the official ruling body of the University. It would seem natural that the wealth of the aristocracy, which the Maharaja of Darbhanga had helped to garner for the institution, would speak most loudly at the University. The British government selected the officials of the first University Court because the Court that would later elect the officials was not yet constituted. Among the members of the first Court, was the Chancellor, the Maharaja of Mysore, the Pro-Chancellor, the Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior, all of whom the British regarded as reliable subjects. While Pandit Malaviya had suggested the appointment of Sir Gooroo Das Banerji, who had been a judge at the Calcutta High Court, the government, according to Parmanand, 'was at the time deeply obsessed with the revolutionary activity in Bengal, which had ramification in Banaras and, therefore, preferred to appoint Dr Sundar Lal.'[1] Sunder Lal was a loyalist who had contributed greatly to the establishment of the University. At the first meeting of the University Court, Pandit Malaviya served only as master of ceremonies and as the representative of a donor, the Maharaja of Udaipur. But, nevertheless, his influence was quickly made apparent. While Pandit Malaviya turned down the elective office of Pro-Vice Chancellor, he nominated his own 'guru', his former nationalist professor at Muir College, Pandit Aditya Ram Bhattacharya, who was elected to the position. Pandit Malaviya himself took an important position on the Executive Council and Board of Appointment that selected teachers for the University. The British considered the people filling other vital positions at the University to be less than trustworthy and Pandit Malaviya's influence was evident. James Meston, the Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces, who attended the meeting of the Court as official visitor of the University, saw that the control over the University was quickly slipping into the wrong hands. Meston told the Viceroy that he felt Harcourt Butler had made a mistake in supporting the establishment of the University, which he regarded as 'sectarian' in nature.

> The decision to permit sectarian universities was one with which I had nothing to do, and which I always regarded as a great blunder . . . . But and here the soreness comes in—the determination of the Brahmin clique who now control the University to secure their ascendancy without delay, has beaten us.[2]

1 Parmanand, *Mahamana,* Vol. 1, p. 427.
2 Meston to Chelmsford, 6 Sept. 1917, India Office Library, MSS.EUR.F.136/3, p. 164.

Meston also wrote that the Maharaja of Darbhanga, who had been the leading fund-raiser for the foundation of the BHU, was also bitter about the situation:

> The Maharaja of Darbhanga had of course a very different set of grievances. He was bitterness itself about the domination of Malaviya and his caucus in the affairs of the University . . . . What in particular was to be the position of the landed aristocracy if Malaviya and his gang were to dominate all public movements? . . . Darbhanga is very well able to look after himself, but the alarm which he expressed, and no doubt genuinely felt, is gravely multiplied in the case of many thousands of less powerful men who live by the land and find their ancient prestige slipping away from them.[3]

While Pandit Malaviya's orthodoxy and efforts on the part of Hindus had earned him the respect of the ruling princes and wealthy landholders, he was still a member of the new western-educated elite who were making their presence felt in India, especially through the instrument of the Indian National Congress, of which Pandit Malaviya had been president. The new class of men like Pandit Malaviya, son of a poor pandit, who had attained education in law at a British institution, was referred to by Harcourt Butler as the 'group who had nothing behind it but education'.[4] In the first University Court, Pandit Malaviya was joined by his professors at Muir College, Pandit Aditya Ram Bhattacharya, Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, Pandit Shiv Kumar Shastri, Dr Ganga Nath Jha, Dr Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr Sir Gooroo Das Banerji, and Bhagavan Das of the former Central Hindu College, all of whom could fit into the category of the newly western-educated class. While these new elites were moderates, they were still regarded by the British as a somewhat unknown factor. Their demands for more representation were trying to the Government of India. Pandit Malaviya already had a reputation for his eloquent and powerful speeches at the annual Congress meetings in which he called British policies into question. In the eyes of the British, Pandit Malaviya as an influential leader among the educated elite was not the ideal figure to be in charge of the BHU. But by 1919, Pandit Malaviya was virtually in charge of the University's administration. Sir Sunder Lal, the first Vice Chancellor, died in February 1918. One of the most qualified men in the country for the position was brought in to assume responsibility for the University. Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyar, a well-known scholar in both English and Sanskrit, was the former Vice Chancellor of Madras

3 Meston to Chelmsford, India Office Library, MSS.EUR.F.136/1, p. 37.

4 Butler, Note on the Political Outlook in India, 20 April 1910, MSS.Eur.D 573/24.

University. He had also served as Advocate-General of Madras.[5] He assumed the post in April 1918, but resigned after hardly one year over a disagreement with Pandit Malaviya. He also encountered opposition from others at the University because he did not speak Hindi. Pandit Malaviya was elected Vice Chancellor on 30 November 1919.

Pandit Malaviya, despite difficulties, managed to retain the financial support of the princes. The voice of the maharajas at the University called for adherence to religious principles and the upholding of law and order. The Maharaja of Mysore, in 1922, following the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the Non-cooperation Movement in India, charged the students to uphold the traditional order of the past, now threatened by 'revolutionary ideas':

> The foundations of the old order, like the very foundations of the deep, are being broken up today, all over the world. Revolutionary doctrines, economic, social, political, educational, are being spread everywhere under a hundred different guises and names, and under a hundred banners. Everywhere there is spreading an under-current of revolt against *order, progress,* and *reform*. The old wisdom and charity are being forsaken and forgotten. This is the great agony today, the agony of the world. It is for Hindu culture to try and root out the seed of disorder . . . . May we not look to graduates of this University to go out into the world of humanity to endeavor by precept and example to raise the standard of morality and good citizenship?[6]

Pandit Malaviya was able to appeal to the sentiments of the princes. Malaviya's reputation as an orthodox Brahman of stainless character and his attractive personality had much to do with his ability to persuade others to cooperate with him. Many regarded him as a saintly figure. As S. Somaskandan, who knew Malaviya remembered,

> 'He was a man of God. There was something in his eyes. He was absolutely compassionate. If anybody came before him, he became Malaviya's slave. He could mesmerize you absolutely, control you.'[7]

Even Gandhi, who at times disagreed with Pandit Malaviya, praised his personal qualities. Gandhi wrote,

> His inner life was of the purest. He was an ocean of kindness. His knowledge of the *Shastras* was immense. *Bhagavata* was his most favourite book. He was

5 Dar and Somaskandan, *History of BHU*, p. 424.
6 Maharaja of Mysore, 'Convocation Address', *Central Hindu College Magazine*, Vol. 22, No. 1 1 Jan. 1922, pp. 5–6.
7 S. Somaskandan, interview, Banaras, July 1995.

a competent preacher. His memory was prodigious. His life was clean and simple.[8]

His reputation for being the exemplar of traditional orthodoxy, supporter of the traditional social order, and promoter of Hinduism helped keep him in good standing with both the nationalists and the loyalists. With his humble bearing and mild manner of speech, he was a master of conciliation. While being a nationalist member of Congress, he was still regarded as moderate supporter of 'order, progress and reform'. With a cooperative approach and appeal to Hindu dharma, Pandit Malaviya was, in a manner of speaking, able 'to rule the ruling' in regard to the operation of the University. As the *Leader* reported in 1924, Pandit Malaviya was able to do this despite his involvement in political activism:

> It is a marvel how the seditious Pandit has got round our Ruling Princes who generally shy at the very word of politics. Malaviya has never agreed to isolate himself from politics and probably regards himself in his heart of hearts as an indispensable person to the political life of the country and values his work in that sphere more highly than in his apparently restricted realm of Nagwa. And yet it would have been a blessing of untold magnitude if the Pandit had devoted himself exclusively to his educational pursuits.[9]

Pandit Malaviya managed to retain, with only a few lapses, the support of the Government of India and the princes for the University through the very tumultuous years of the independence movement, even when his own political activities crossed the boundary into the extreme. Though not without occasional opposition, Pandit Malaviya remained at the helm of affairs at the University until 1939, when, faced with failing health and a situation of deep debt at the University, he persuaded S. Radhakrishnan to take his place as Vice Chancellor.[10]

8 Mohandas K. Gandhi, 'Malaviyaji', *Harijan Sevak,* 8 Dec. 1946, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 86, p. 148.

9 'The Hindu University', *Leader* (Allahabad) 31 May 1924, Nehru Memorial Library.

10 S. Gopal writes in *Radhakrishnan: A Biography*, p. 167, 'The University of Banaras, set up in 1917 as a nursery of Hindu culture, had by 1939 developed into the largest residential University in the country, with advanced courses both in the sciences and in the traditional classics. The respect which the founder and vice chancellor, Madan Mohan Malaviya, commanded by his dedication and orthodox austerity had enabled him to collect considerable funds from Hindu princes and merchants so as to acquire an extensive site, construct numerous buildings and not only teach basic subjects but introduce various disciplines not taught elsewhere. . . . But the rapid expansion, along with administrative inadequacy, had resulted in debt of about Rs 2,000,000—in those times an extremely high figure. Malaviya recognized that a younger and more energetic vice chancellor was required to deal with these

Pandit Malaviya was one of a strong contingent of Brahman pandits at the University. While not all the pandits, such as Motilal Nehru, chose to live orthodox lifestyles, the predominant opinion was that the Brahmans, as upholders of traditional orthodoxy, should maintain a religious atmosphere on the campus that reflected their standards. Smoking, drinking alcohol, and eating meat were forbidden at the University. The enforcement of these rules led to a direct censoring of the habits of some of the maharajas. There is a story, for example, that in 1916 at the first meeting of the University Court, where many pandits were present, the Pro-Vice Chancellor, the Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior, was smoking a cigar. One of the pandits, Letin Shastri, stood up and said, 'The chairman of this august meeting is smoking a cigar and insulting the members of the Court.' All the pandits walked out and did not return, so the meeting could not continue until the Maharaja had disposed of his cigar and apologized to the members of the University Court for his insulting behaviour. The Brahman influence on the campus led to the perception that the BHU, as a bastion of orthodoxy, was 'old-fashioned'.[11]

The Brahman standards, though, were at times contested on the campus. Not everyone accepted those standards or conformed to them in their personal lives. Amarnath Jha, the Vice Chancellor in 1948, was a connoisseur of expensive cigars and smoked them regularly. When he presided over the Court, though, he respected the pandits' aversion to cigar smoking. As Parmanand reported, 'He knew about the tradition and he did not smoke at the meeting. He took *supari*, but felt very restless.'[12] After the meetings, though, the Vice Chancellor resumed his smoking. Others on the campus also broke the rules. Among the notable professors on the campus were a number who were known to be under the 'evil tobacco narcotic influence from the over-use of snuff'.[13] The influence of Brahman leadership was clearly limited. Brahmanical authority was to take a high seat at BHU, but it was not one of absolute control. The BHU was, after all, meant to unite all Hindus. While the

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problems, and Radhakrishnan seemed to him his natural successor—widely respected as a scholar and expositor of modern Hinduism and with a reputation of success in educational administration.'

11 Pushpa Pratap, interview, Banaras, March 1997.

12 S. Somaskandan, interview, Banaras, November 1996.

13 Written by an anonymous student who identifies himself as a member of the erstwhile Bull Association, Banaras Hindu University, 'Pandit Ganga Prasad Mehta: Reminiscences', *BHU Old Boys Association—Calcutta 1963–64* (Varanasi: BHU, 1964), p. 33.

Brahmans maintained a level of influence, the University would have failed in its purpose of promoting unity if Brahmans alone had dictated every move at the institution. As events at the University proved, the beliefs and plans of the Brahmanical contingent did not receive the approval of all Hindus.

One of the first conflicts that arose at BHU concerned the decisions in the College of Theology that religious instruction in Hinduism should be in keeping with the sanatana dharma (orthodox beliefs and practice) and that only Brahmans following the traditional rules of *sadachar* (morality) should be appointed as instructors and lecturers in religion. A debate arose over whether professors, regardless of their caste, could be selected according to their level of accomplishment or should the positions in theology be restricted to Brahmans alone. It was acknowledged that the College would hold a very influential position in the University and therefore the selection of its members was very important for establishing the all-India quality of the University:

> The new University is to be all-Indian—the old universities are territorial. If men from Bengal and Bombay and Madras are to come to study in the United Provinces, that will only be because Benares will give them something that they cannot get elsewhere. That something is the faculty of theology. It is to be a specifically sectarian faculty, as absolutely Hindu as forethought can make it, and the existence of a faculty lying outside the province of the British Government has profoundly affected the whole of the University's organisation. The Government cannot appoint the professors of theology, who must however, be the real governors of the University if it is to succeed in its purpose.[14]

The sacralization of higher education at BHU was the aim of its founders. Western secular education, devoid of religious aim or guidance, was considered destructive. While such mythologizing of education may seem overly sentimental and contrived, it should be remembered that major universities of America, including Harvard, Princeton, and the University of Chicago were affiliated with Christian denominations. Just as the founders of BHU planned for the College of Theology to have a great influence on the entire University, the founders of American universities hailing theology as the 'queen of the sciences', also hoped that the divinity schools would serve to create a Christian atmosphere in the universities.[15]

14 *The Indiaman*, 'The BHU Bill', 23 April 1915, India Office Library, Butler Collection, MSS.EUR.F.116/70.

15 See Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

These western universities attempted to fuse religion with worldly, scientific knowledge. University education became a vital step in the process of clerical training. The robes of the clergy became academic robes. The clerical title of 'reverend' was often followed by the academic title 'Dr' as receiving the terminal degree in University education became the pinnacle of religious training for the clergy. In the modern university, it was hoped, there would be a marriage of secular and religious education. As indicative of this perspective, engraved in large stone letters on the tower of the main building of the University of Texas were words of the Christian scripture that read, 'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free'. The university slogan had its counterpart in the motto of BHU: 'Through knowledge one attains immortality'. The interpretation of the motto, effectively adds secular, scientific knowledge to the formerly exclusive domain of religious knowledge. In the early years of the century, as the scientific paradigm gained prominence in the western-educated population of the world, the attempt to bring the influence of religion to university education was focused on the development of colleges of theology within the universities, which were to guide the other sciences. The professors of theology were to be entrusted with the guidance of the institution and were, therefore, to be chosen with care. At BHU, the issue of who was qualified to teach theology became a divisive one.

BHU, as a self-ruling institution, was free to determine who would be appointed to teach in each of its colleges, including the College of Theology. It was a difficult moment for the University and a test for Pandit Malaviya. Pandit Malaviya, who firmly believed that only Brahmans should be allowed to teach theology, met with strong opposition from several members of the Court including Shiv Prasad Gupta and Bhagavan Das. Pandit Malaviya insisted that only Brahmans practising strict orthodoxy would be suitable for instructing the students. He had nothing against non-Brahman faculty lecturing on religious topics, but felt that they should do it in the English department. Many on the Court agreed with him, but the recommendation was not taken well by a number of non-Brahmans. The issue of the theology faculty brought Pandit Malviya's plans to unite all Hindus into question. As his biographer writes,

> His plan of uniting all Hindus under the banner of the Sanatan Dharma, i.e. Hinduism of the Puranas which ordains faith in divine reincarnation and enjoins adherence to *Varna Vyavastha* or system of caste with the Brahman at the top became vulnerable because he himself was a Brahman.[16]

16 Parmanand, *Mahamana,* pp. 434–5; V.S. Agrawala, 'Emblem of Banaras BHU: Goddess Sarasvati,' *Prajna*, Vol. 8:2 (1962), pp. 1–4.

There were many supporters and donors to the University, among them the princes, who were not Brahman. Disagreement on the issue of appointment of faculty had the potential to send into disarray any sense of unity of purpose at BHU.

Pandit Malaviya did not look to common consensus to decide the matter; instead, he turned towards ancient scriptures. He referred to the authority of a dharmashastra text, the *Manusmriti*, which outlines the duties and restrictions of the four varnas. Pandit Malaviya's use of the *Manusmriti* to settle an administrative question reflected the importance ascribed to the text by British officials and the contemporary Indian scholars. There is no doubt that the *Manusmriti* is an important document, a Brahmanical text believed to have been written about in 600 BC. But the text by no means could be described as the authoritative text of Pandit Malaviya's day. There is no way of knowing if the text, or rather any of the many versions of the text, was ever truly authoritative. The text could have been conceived as a Brahman 'blue print' for an ideal ordering of society. Authors of the other dharmashastra texts from the same ancient period refer to *Manusmriti*, but there is no way of knowing if the status accorded to it by the other authors meant that the text was accepted by only a small Brahman group or by a larger group consisting also of the non-Brahmans. The reverence given to the text by Pandit Malaviya could be understood to spring from the fact that he was a Brahman, and the text accords special place to Brahmans, especially with respect with authority to teach the Vedas. But the recognition given to the text by western scholars in the eighteenth century, who 'discovered' the Sanskrit text, translated it into English, and made it available for the first time to the English-educated Indians, also contributed to the authority of the text. It was largely due to the Orientalist scholarship that such texts were deemed equivalent of the Christian scripture and accorded an authority and popularity, which they may have never possessed in the diverse societies of the subcontinent. The authority of the *Manusmriti*, therefore, to which Pandit Malaviya deferred, was, in part, a modern construction.

Pandit Malaviya looked to the *Manusmriti* to answer the question of non-Brahmans teaching in the Theology department. The *Manusmriti* states that only Brahmans should be the teachers of the Veda. It makes allowance for exceptions, stating that in times of distress, others may teach. Pandit Malaviya, urging the members of the Court to abide by the 'catholic spirit' of the sacred text, presented a resolution to his fellow Court members which read, 'The faculty of Theology should appoint Lecturers in Hindu religion in a catholic spirit of the Manava Dharma

Shastra, without laying down any policy which may injure the feeling of any section of the community.'[17] In Pandit Malaviya's perspective, all the lecturers in theology would have to be Brahmans, as they were to teach the Veda. As there was no lack of Brahmans available to teach in the department, there was no emergency, and therefore no excuse for non-Brahmans to teach. Claiming the authority of the text, Pandit Malaviya effectively set the issue above debate. Not many in the Court would claim to be orthodox Hindus and at the same time dispute the authority of the text which the western scholars confirmed as both sacred and authoritative. Pandit Malaviya persuaded a majority of the members to accept the authority of the *Manusmriti* and effectively barred all non-Brahmans, including Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das, from teaching in the College of Theology.

The same argument was used to restrict admission to the College of Theology. While it had been supposed that all Hindu students would be admitted to the College, there was one clause in the regulations of the University that said those courses related to the Vedas would be open to only those candidates who, according to the accepted Hindu usage, were qualified to officiate at Hindu religious ceremonies.[18] While this clause did not specifically mention Brahmans, it was common knowledge that only Brahmans were allowed to perform the rituals. The clause also effectively banned women from studying in the College.

In 1945, the issue was again raised over the refusal of the College of Theology to admit women. Even under the leadership of the more liberal-minded Radhakrishnan, who was the then Vice Chancellor, the University Court upheld Pandit Malaviya's position.[19] In response to

17 Parmanand, *Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya*, Vol. 1, p. 443

18 *BHU Calendar 1922-25*, Chapter 39, the 'Faculty of Theology,' p. 336, reads that the degree of Dharma Shastri would 'be open to those candidates who desire and are competent according to the accepted usage of the community, to officiate at Hindu religious ceremonies.'

19 In the *BHU Minutes of the Court*, No. 1, held on 1 Dec. 1945, pp. 7–8, Vice Chancellor S. Radhakrishnan, as Chair, was reported to say,

There has been much agitation about the admission of a girl student to the College of Theology. I should like to take this opportunity to make the present position of the University clear. It is our objective to throw open our spiritual heritage to persons of all classes, castes, and creeds, men and women, high and low, anybody, Hindu or non-Hindu, can study our classical scriptures, the Vedas, in the Sanskrit Department of the Arts College or in the College of Oriental Learning. It is laid down that admission to the College of Theology shall be limited to the Hindus. From this it follows that all Hindus are eligible for such admission. There is, however, a clause

agitation on the campus over the issue, Radhakrishnan explained that it was the objective of the University to provide religious education to students of all castes and both genders, but provision for this was made in the College of Oriental Learning, where the University was starting a course in Vedic literature. With regard to the nature of the Vedic course, Radhakrishnan expressed hope that the Board of Study would be generous with the contents offered therein. He referred to the fact that Pandit Malaviya had parted with the exclusive orthodoxy in giving twice-born initiation to Untouchables:

> I do not wish to anticipate the recommendation of this committee, but those who know what Panditjee did in the matter of giving initiation to Harijans in spite of the opposition of the orthodox, will be justified to expecting a liberal lead. Everything will have to be done to consolidate the Hindu society.[20]

Radhakrishnan and the administration apparently were working to unify all the members of the University and did not want factionalism to erupt between castes. But reconciling orthodoxy and liberalism was not easy.

Pandit Malaviya had set an example in stretching the limits of orthodoxy in order to unify the Hindu community. In the face of a reported decline in the number of Hindus in India and efforts to give separate representation to Untouchable castes, Pandit Malaviya had become involved in giving twice-born initiation to Untouchables as an act of solidarity. But in performing the initiation, Pandit Malaviya did not give the Untouchables the same initiation which was traditionally reserved for the higher castes. He made a modification. Rather than imparting a secret mantra to the Untouchables, the mantra used for the Untouchables had teaching of a prohibitive nature. In order to encourage the Untouchables to lead purer lives, the mantra was a vow in which the initiates promised not to lie, steal, or drink.[21] The giving of initiation to Untouch-

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which says that the course in one of the Paddhaties allied to the Veda shall be 'open to those candidates only who, according to accepted Hindu usage, are qualified to officiate at Hindu religious ceremonies and rituals.' As the course in the Veda in the College of Theology in all the three stages of Madhyam, Sastri, and Acharya, happen to include this part, namely, Paddhaties and Karma Kanda, we are unable to admit the student to the College of Theology. Yet, it is my earnest desire that no students should be prevented from studying our scriptures. So the Board of Studies has framed a course in Vedic literature under Sahitya in the College of Oriental Learning and it has been approved by the Faculty of Oriental Learning.

20 Ibid.

21 Sitaram Chaturvedi, interview, Muzaffarnagar, December 1996.

ables, which was brought about by political exigencies, was a new, modified ritual. It was distinct from the traditional initiations of the upper caste Hindus. Pandit Malaviya found a way of upholding custom while at the same time providing a ritual that would be inclusive of Untouchables. The University Court under Pandit Malaviya's successor Radhakrishnan had a precedent for giving a modified form of religious knowledge to those previously barred by Brahmanical tradition. Maintaining the traditional Brahmanical hold upon religious knowledge and ritual, the University found a means of pacifying requests for knowledge of the Vedas by non-Brahmans. While the non-Brahman students were given a measure of education in the Vedas, the theological students, young men planning to be priests, remained the sole receptors of the hidden knowledge of the Vedas and of ritual. Throughout the pre-independence years of the University, the Brahmans had an exclusive domain in the College of Theology.

Pandit Malaviya was very persuasive in winning over the majority of the University Court to the Brahmanical view. But it was apparent that the view was both contested and, to a degree, flexible. The dissent voiced in the Court over the exclusion of non-Brahmans showed that not all Hindus regarded the *Manusmriti* and the traditions of varnasrama dharma as authoritative. While the *Manusmriti* stated that only Brahmans could be teachers of the Veda, there was a long-standing debate on whether birth alone distinguished a person as a Brahman, or whether one's conduct made one a Brahman. The debate questioned the imputed sanctity of a Brahman who was a thief, for instance, and, likewise, the impurity of a sudra who conducted all of his affairs purely. It was Bhagavan Das, a non-Brahman and a well-known scholar of religion, who first brought forward the protest against excluding non-Brahmans from Theology. He and Annie Besant both believed that character and behaviour determined caste, not birth. There were others as well, besides the theosophists, who also did not accept the idea that one's position in life should be determined by birth. Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar, the Vice Chancellor during the time of the dispute, and a Brahman himself, opposed the restriction and later resigned due to a disagreement with Pandit Malaviya over the issue. Shiv Prasad Gupta, a member of the Court, was also adamantly against the decision to exclude non-Brahmans.

Shiv Prasad Gupta, a wealthy landowner and nationalist, was a close friend of Pandit Malaviya and a devoted supporter of the revival of Hinduism. He was a major figure in the Hindi movement, starting a Hindi press in Banaras and supporting the several Hindi publications, includ-

ing the *Aaj* newspaper of Banaras. Even the numbers on the clock in his home were in the Devanagari script. When Pandit Malaviya's Hindi periodical, *Maryada*, was suffering financially, Shiv Prasad Gupta took over the publication of the magazine as a favour to Pandit Malaviya, moving the publication from Allahabad to Banaras where it did well.[22] He worked for the uplift of north Indian Hindus, not only through the promotion of Hindi, but also by calling for reforms within Hinduism. One of his concerns was the removal of the practices associated with belief in a rigid caste system, which he believed had contributed to the decline of the Hindu society. He once sent out a questionnaire to all the influential Hindus of Banaras, which questioned the validity of hereditary caste and asked if it was not the fixed caste system that had driven Hindus to be converted to other religions. It was apparent from the questions that Shiv Prasad believed not only that the idea of the fixed caste system was destructive to Hinduism, but also that the Hindu tradition itself offered a precedent for making the system more flexible. Shiv Prasad argued that if the caste of a woman could change at marriage, then it was true that a person could change caste. The Brahman argument of caste determination by birth alone could be contested.

While Shiv Prasad and Pandit Malaviya had many things in common—the promotion of Hindi, the uplift of their fellow Hindus, nationalism—differences between the two eventually led Shiv Prasad to resign from his position on the University Court and to withdraw his support from the University. When Gandhi called for a boycott of British-supported institutions, Shiv Prasad agreed with the tactic and criticized Pandit Malaviya for refusing to forfeit the charter and the support of the Government of India. Shiv Prasad left the University Court and donated funds toward the establishment of the rival institution, Kashi Vidyapith. He intended the school to be a national institution run along the lines Gandhi suggested. Despite serious differences, Shiv Prasad Gupta and Pandit Malaviya remained close friends. Their friendship was another example of the seeming paradoxes within Hindu practice in Banaras. Shiv Prasad Gupta, who resented Pandit Malaviya's position to retain the exclusive Brahman control of the College of Theology, respected his orthodoxy. Throughout Pandit Malaviya's career at the University, until his death, all of his food was sent to the University from Shiv Prasad's home. In adherence to Pandit Malaviya's tradition of only taking food

22 Sampurnanand, *Kuch Smritiyan aur Kuch Sphut Vicar* (in Hindi) (Banaras: Jnanmandal Limited, 1962), p. 45.

prepared by Brahmans, the food was uncooked. The difference in the two issues, of personal religious practice, and barring non-Brahmans from teaching, was that the latter imposed judgment on the ability of others according to group identification and not personal merit. Not all Hindus, even those who respected Brahmans, believed that Brahmans had the authority to make that judgment. Brahmanical ritual purity did not equal uncontested authority in matters of religion, and especially not in non-religious fields.

The exclusion of non-Brahman professors from teaching was limited to the College of Theology. In other areas, Brahmans claimed no authority by right of their caste. There were no bars toward either students or faculty regarding caste or religion in any of the other colleges of the University. During his delivery of the BHU Convocation Address of 1923, the Chancellor of the University, Maharaja Sayajirao, the Gaekwad of Baroda, stressed the need for the education for all castes of Hindus. Gaekwad did much for the education of the Untouchable castes in Baroda, opening eighteen schools for them as early as 1883, and later starting boarding schools and granting scholarships for higher education. In his convocation speech, he blamed the decadence of Hinduism in modern times to the Brahman refusal in the Puranic period to admit students of other castes to education:

> [In the Puranic period] Admission was confined to Brahmans, students of any other castes being sternly excluded. Surely this exclusion of the great majority, in favour of a privileged few, goes far to explain the decadence of modern times. Let us be careful to avoid the error of confining learning to any particular class; let us throw open the doors of the University.[23]

While Pandit Malaviya found religious grounds to restrict the teaching of theology to Brahmans, he agreed that other subjects should be open to the best-qualified Hindus, regardless of caste. An all-India Hindu institution could not be exclusively Brahman. Malaviya personally recruited many faculty members, Brahman and non-Brahman alike, from different parts of India to fill the positions in the University.

While faculty and students at BHU represented all the regions of the subcontinent, the majority of the students were from Brahman families in the area of eastern UP and Bihar. During the early years of the University, Brahmans composed around 50 per cent of the student popula-

23 Gaekwad of Baroda cited in *Central Hindu College Magazine*, Vol. 23, 1 March 1923, No. 3, p. 58.

tion, as they did generally in colleges throughout India during the same period. In the other half of the student population, the non-Brahmans, there were many bright ones who could hold their own in competition with the Brahmans. Brahman students were not the only students who made top marks. The long tradition of education among Brahmans gave them a head start over the non-Brahman students, but the contemporary society was changing due to the colonial situation and western education. While traditional Brahman education had consisted of studying the Vedas and the *vedangas* (subjects including recitation and astrology) which were dissociated with religious practice, western education had introduced subjects which were not of a religious nature and were available in colleges in India to students of all castes. As young men left their traditional family occupation to seek service with the Government of India, education ceased to be the exclusive domain of the Brahmans. Earlier, in 1887, T. Chatterjee, the Deputy Magistrate of Burdwan, noted the decline of Brahmans in the intellectual field. He related that Dr Ballantyne of Benares College had attributed the intelligence of Brahmans to heredity and used to say that if he had a bright student, the student would surely be a Brahman.[24] However, Chatterjee had found that the situation was changing. He found that in the Calcutta University, for instance, if a Brahman were the head of the class one year, a Kayasth would surely be the head of the class the next year. Chatterjee wrote that poverty kept Brahmans from obtaining the benefits of a costly modern education:

> The falling off of the Brahmans from their high position as the intellectual leaders of the people is owing to various causes of which the chief is their poverty. The *Edinburgh Reviewer* pretended to cultivate literature on a little oatmeal. The Brahmans might say with more truth that they cultivate literature on a little rice and dal. But those days are gone by. The *kayasthas* who are on the whole far richer than the Brahmans are outstripping their old superiors in the race for learning, for modern learning is a costly thing.[25]

Pandit Malaviya saw the cost of education as prohibitive. He blamed 'the deplorable backwardness of the United Provinces on the continued financial injustice of the Government of India, leaving the demand for education unsatisfied by increasing its costs.'[26] At BHU, to meet the

24 T. Chatterjee, 10 Jan. 1887, Risley Ethnographical Papers, India Office Library, MSS.EUR.E.101, p. 9.

25 Ibid.

26 Madan Mohan Malaviya, as cited in the *Leader,* 21 January 1916, Nehru Memorial Library.

needs of the sons of poor priestly families, the students of the College of Theology who were trained to be priests were not charged any fees. The poverty of the students of the College of Theology was famous. It was said that the only clock on the campus was placed on the front of the Sanskrit Mahavidyala because none of the students of the College could afford a watch of his own. There were also numerous scholarships provided by wealthy patrons for the 'poor Brahman boys'. There were other scholarships, though, designated for other castes, or students from certain regions, or were based solely on financial need. While there was clear evidence of the willingness on the part of the patrons of the University to raise the position of other castes along with the Brahman, the percentage of Brahmans at the University far exceeded the percentage of people in India who were Brahman, creating a large Brahman presence.

It was evident that though the University had many Brahman students from UP, there were enough students from other places, and from other castes, to create a very diverse campus. It was hoped that the required religious instruction, combined with the residential aspect of the campus would serve to unite the students as Hindus. The fact that the members of the University Court, and the majority of the students and faculty, including Sikhs and Jains, were considered Hindu did not necessarily mean that a common bond automatically held members of the University together. The absence of such a thing as a Hindu identity in the early years of BHU is reflected in its calendars. The early calendars listed the names of the newly admitted students each year along with their religion. In 1922 the calendar listed one Sikh, one Muslim, and one Hindu. Only one student identified himself as Hindu. All the other students identified themselves according to caste. Hindus from diverse sects and backgrounds, living together in hostels or faculty housing of the campus and away from the familiar pattern of life centred on family, caste, and community, had to re-define themselves in the context of a modern university. The University was faced with the challenge of presenting a form of Hindu religion that would help dissolve differences among the students.

The founders of the University considered the introduction of compulsory religious education for all the Hindu students at the University a major accomplishment. Religious instruction was supposed to be the single most important factor separating BHU from the other British universities in India. Religious studies were to be the soul of the University. As in universities and colleges in England, where all the students were required to attend divinity classes and chapel, at BHU, the students would

also receive training in their faith. Presenting Hinduism in the classroom context was a means of giving the same dignity to the religion as the British gave to Christianity. Donors to the University expected religious instruction to both quell seditious tendencies and interest in revolutionary ideas, to reinforce the perceived traditional social structure in India, as well as to create pride among the students. Religion was to be the ground of Hindu unity and pride at the University. But there was a problem of how to fit the diverse and multiple manifestations of Hinduism within the pages of a textbook.

The effort to find a textbook for instruction in the Hindu religion which would not offend the diverse Hindu population of the University led to the adoption of Annie Besant's Sanatana Dharma textbooks, which had been used at the Central Hindu College. The textbooks presented an interpretation of the basic tenets of the Hindu faith as loosely based upon Brahmanical Hinduism. The Hindu textbooks that she produced presented a very broad and general interpretation of Hinduism that corresponded to western ideological categories of religion. In criticism of the idea of Annie Besant teaching theology, a supporter of Pandit Malaviya's policy, Pandit Lakshmana Shastri, commented that no Hindu present at the University would like to get his religious ceremonies performed by Mrs Annie Besant.[27] It was Besant, however, who authored the textbooks that were used for religious instruction in the department.

Pandit Malaviya chose Besant's textbooks after an unsuccessful attempt to have a textbook produced specifically for use at BHU. In 1906, Malaviya had commissioned Pandit Umapati Dvivedi to write a book on the essentials of Hinduism to be used in the instruction of students. The book, the *Sanatanadharmoddhara*,[28] was completed in 1912, but not to Pandit Malaviya's satisfaction. Dvivedi's text of four volumes, written in Sanskrit with a Hindi translation, could be likened to a Purana in its diverse range of content and style. The book had sections such as Adoration of Brahmans, Religious ability of holy places, Characteristics of firm devotion, Characteristics of the Veda, Reply to the doubts about the inconsistent interjection of the Veda, Meaning and exposition of Purvamimansa, and Max Müller's opinion criticized. The *Sanatanadharmoddhara*, according to the author, was not meant to be

27 Dar and Somaskandan, *History of BHU*, p. 481.

28 Umapati Dvivedi, *Sanatanadharmoddhara: Being a Sanskrit Treatise on the Eternal Religion of India with a Free Rendering in Hindi* (Banaras: Pandit Rudra Dutt and Pandit Harihar Dutt Dvivedi, 1932).

an easy read. The author wrote that he intended to 'apply the test of reasoning and logic to religious theories based on shastric texts.'[29] In contrast, Annie Besant's little Hindu textbooks are intentionally reductionist. Besant explained the methodology she used in writing her books, 'That which unites all Hindus in a common faith must be clearly and simply taught; *all that divides them must be ignored*. Lastly, care must be taken to cultivate a wide spirit of tolerance.'[30] The textbook religion that emerges from Besant's insistence on clarity and simplicity, and her willingness to ignore differences, is one that is well defined and coherent, unlike the amorphous and bewildering diversity of manifestations of Hinduism existing in the communities of India. Besant's Hinduism is a construct, one that portrays religion in a concise, graspable form, a form amenable to classroom instruction. The textbooks, ignoring regional and sectarian differences portrayed Hinduism as a single religion. In rejecting the more complex and stringent apologetics of the learned pandit who was first commissioned to write a book for religions instruction, Pandit Malaviya must have realized that such fineness of argument would not appeal to the broad Hindu population which he hoped to unite as a political force. Neither would it appeal to the British, whose support Pandit Malaviya had to garner if the University were to come into being. Annie Besant's textbooks, based upon western conceptions of religion, seemed to offer the answer, and were adopted as the religious textbooks of BHU.

It would seem that the institution of compulsory religious classes and the use of a common textbook at the University would have a unifying effect upon the student body. But there was a basic problem with compulsory instruction; it was a Christian practice, which did not conform to Hindu notions of spirituality. When the University was faced with the situation of punishing students for not attending religious classes, Pandit Malaviya understood it was un-Hindu to force anyone to be religious. While the compulsory religious instruction remained among the regulations of the University, attendance was not monitored closely and exams were such that any student could easily pass them without steady attendance in the classes. The University, under such circumstances, could not foster adherence to a single set of beliefs, such as were set out in Annie Besant's Hindu textbooks. The attempt to dispense a common conception of religion through classroom instruction failed.

29 Ibid., p. 1.
30 Besant, *Advanced Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics*, p. xviii.

The University tried several other means of fostering a religious atmosphere on the campus. In addition to religion classes, students were encouraged to perform *sandhya*, morning and evening prayers. The saying of prayers, though, was not a structured group activity and was never enforced. While some students performed prayers in morning and evening, some students never did so. A former student and later Professor of History at BHU, Hiralal Singh, when asked if he said his prayers in the morning, replied, 'No, I did not say prayers'. He said that at Uday Pratap College, which he attended before joining BHU, a strict regimen required that all students perform sandhya prayers at dawn and dusk in the college hall. There was no such requirement at BHU.[31] Neither was there compulsion to worship at a temple.

Pandit Malaviya had wanted a temple to be the focal point of the University. While plans for a temple on the campus had been included in the original plans for the University in 1916, none of the donors to the University chose to fund the construction of the grand Vishvanath temple. In few instances, the donors to the University refused to yield to the wishes of Pandit Malaviya to fund the temple construction, and instead chose to give priority to the construction of colleges and hostels, gymnasiums, and laboratories. So for thirty years, while there were small shrines at various locations around the campus, BHU had no Hindu temple. It was not until 1947, in honouring a previous promise to Pandit Malaviya that Baldevdas Birla donated funds for the construction of the temple. Students who were at the campus before 1947 said in their interviews that only on rare occasions did they visit the temple of Sankat Mochan, or the Durga Mandir, the temple closest to the campus. When they did so, it was usually before exams or for special festivals. It was evident that temple worship was not defined as an essential element of the Hindu faith by the majority of students. Perhaps the donors felt that the creation of a common temple would be impossible as students worshipped different deities and recited different prayers. Corporate worship, under these circumstances, would be difficult. The administrators of the University looked towards the Christian countries for other means of creating corporate religion.

Pandit Malaviya also wanted to educate the campus community in the essentials of the Hindu faith. Religious education, he wrote, was sadly lacking in India, especially when compared to that received in Europe and America:

31 Hiralal Singh, interview, Banaras, September 1997.

> The lamentable condition into which Hindus have now fallen is, in a great measure, due to their divorce from the ancient religion and literature of India . . . . Hindu princes, nobles, gentry, and barring exceptions here and there—even Brahmans receive no systematic Hindu education or spiritual ministrations. This state of things is in marked contrast with that prevailing in the prosperous countries of Europe and America where religion, as a rule, forms a necessary part of education; where large congregations assemble in well-appointed churches every week to listen to sermons preached by well-educated clergymen discharging their duties under the control of a well-established church government.[32]

To promote a better understanding of the Hindu faith, Pandit Malaviya encouraged the members of the campus community to attend lectures on the Bhagavadgita held on Sunday mornings. Pandit Malaviya, in starting the Sunday Gita classes was hoping to educate in the Hindus in the same manner as the Christians. But at BHU, students were not forced to attend the lectures or to say their prayers. There was no obligation to attend the Sunday Gita lectures, which were obviously congregational meetings meant to correspond to the Christian practice of going to church on Sunday morning. The Gita lectures were referred to as 'sermons'. Attendance at the sermons was usually thin unless a famous speaker was featured. S. Radhakrishnan, the Vice Chancellor of the University from 1939 until 1947, was a well-known orator and his Gita lecture drew crowds. But otherwise, the attendance was dismal. As Parmanand relates, the Gita lectures were not very popular:

> These discourses were given by eminent personalities and noted exponents but were as a rule, attended only by the more devout and discerning among the staff and only a few students. Ram Naresh Tripathi tells us how one of his sons tried to persuade Malaviya (in the interest of his delicate health) from going to the Gita lecture on a Sunday pleading that hardly four persons were likely to be there. Malaviya put him off saying that he would in that case raise the audience to five![33]

Pandit Malaviya's plans for organizing religion did not flourish on the BHU campus. Holding the apparent attitude of many Hindus at BHU, S. Radhakrishnan was averse to attempts to create a homogenous religion. He wrote, 'When religion becomes organized, man ceases to be free. It is not God that is worshipped, but the group or the authority that claims to speak in His name.'[34] While the attendance at the Sunday Gita lectures

32 Malaviya, *Prospectus of a Proposed BHU.*

33 Parmanand, *Mahamana,* Vol. 1, p. 443.

34 Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *East and West: Some Reflections* (New York: Harper and Bros. 1956), p. 41.

was sporadic and congregational religion found little success on the campus, ideas associated with the Gita were very popular.

Pandit Malaviya did not arbitrarily choose the Bhagavadgita, which was a segment of the Sanskrit epic, the Mahabharata, to be the topic of Sunday 'sermons'. Like the *Manusmriti*, attention given to the text by western scholars and British administrators elevated the Gita to a status deserving of special veneration by Hindus. The Bhagavadgita was the first text translated directly from Sanskrit into English. The translator, Charles Wilkins, published the work, titled *The Bhagvat-Geeta or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon, in eighteen lectures, with notes, translated from the original in Sanskreet, or ancient language of the Brahmans,* in London in 1785. A second edition of the book was published in India in 1809 for the East India Company. Warren Hastings wrote the introduction to the translation. In 1875, K. T. Telang was the first Indian to translate the Gita into English. It was published in the eighth volume of Max Müller's *Sacred Books of the East.*[35] Other translations into English followed, including that of John Davies (1878), Kisori Mohan Ganguli (1883–96), Edwin Arnold in 1860, Annie Besant in 1895, and M. N. Dutt and R. C. Dutt (1897). In the twentieth century, hundreds of translations and commentaries followed. The English translation of the Gita reached many Indians who did not know Sanskrit, including Mahatma Gandhi, who wrote:

> Toward the end of my second year in England (1889), I came across two Theosophists, brothers, and both unmarried. They talked to me about the *Gita*; they were reading Sir Edwin Arnold's translation—*The Song Celestial*—and they invited me to read the original with them. I felt ashamed, as I had read the Divine Poem neither in Sanskrit nor in Gujarati. I was constrained to tell them that I had not read the Gita, but that I would gladly read it with them, and that though my knowledge of Sanskrit was meagre, still I hoped to be able the original to the extent of telling where the translation failed to bring out the message. I began reading the Gita with them . . . .The book struck me as one of priceless worth. The impression has ever been growing on me with the result that I regard it today as the book *par excellence* for the knowledge of the truth.[36]

The influence of the English translation of the Gita upon the popularity of the text was significant. While there had been several translations of the text throughout the centuries, it was not until the after the English had translated the Gita that the first translation into Hindi appeared:

35 K. T. Telang, ed., *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 8 (Oxford: 1882).
36 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p. 57.

The earliest translations into Indian vernaculars were made into Marathi (1290), Braj (ca.1320), Malayalam (1400), Maithili (1615) and Gujarati (ca.1620). Vishnudasa (AD 1435). Although some early versions may be defined as 'Hindi', the first translation into Hindi seems to be the verse-rendering *BG Mala* of Jagatanada (1802), followed by a prose-version of Nandirama (ca.1807).[37]

The determination of the Orientalists that the Gita was a significant religious text was followed by a dramatic increase in translations. In the 1800s, thirty-four Hindi and thirteen English translations were completed, the majority of which were published between 1866 and 1880. The twentieth century saw a virtual explosion of Hindi translations, particularly between 1910 and 1930, when there were around 100 translations.[38] The remarkable production of translations of the Gita can be explained by several factors—the attention given by Europeans to the text, the rise of the vernacular press, and the association of the text with the nationalist movement. The Gita, along with *Manusmriti,* was among a precious few Sanskrit works which came to embody the Renaissance 'canon'. Many western-educated Hindus and orientalists came to regard the Gita as the 'Hindu Bible'.[39] Actually neither of the texts is canonical in the manner of the Vedas, the *sruti* (heard or revealed) texts. The Gita and *Manusmriti* have traditionally been designated smriti (remembered) texts and are less authoritative. Nevertheless, the Bhagavadgita took on a special relevance as Hindus began to project pride in their own culture as a means of resistance to colonialism.

The importance of karmayoga, which was regarded as one of the lessons of the Bhagavadgita, became a major inspiration in the struggle for Indian independence. The story of the Gita centres around the advice Lord Krishna gives to Arjuna concerning a battle, which is being waged between the Pandavas and Kauravas. The two groups are related to each other and members of both sides have enjoyed close familial relations. Arjuna, a warrior, is one of the family members going to war. He hesitates, pondering the righteousness of going to war against his kinsmen, friends, and teachers. Lord Krishna tells him that he is a warrior; he must perform the duty of a warrior. He must fight. He would not be sinning; he would attain union with the divine if he performed his own duty, his work, his karma in life, and did it without concern for his own

37 Winand M. Callewart and Shilanand Hemraj, *Bhagadgitanuvada: A Study in Transcultural Translation* (Ranchi: Satya Bharati Publication, 1983), p. 126.

38 Ibid., pp. 118f.

39 Bharati, 'The Hindu Renaissance', p. 274.

safety or for benefits he would receive. Swami Vivekananda, perhaps the most influential promoter of the Hindu renaissance, was one of the first to emphasize the theme of karmayoga in the Gita, the duty of Hindus to work in the world, to effect change for the good through selfless duty. Bal Gangadhar Tilak's Marathi translation of the Gita, the *Gitarahasya,* which served to inspire nationalist fervour, also focused on the idea of Karmayoga in the text. Tilak's interpretation of the Gita did not rule out violence as means of restoring righteousness in the world. Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, and others did not agree with Gandhi's interpretation of the text regarding non-violent resistance. Khudiram Bose, a revolutionary who threw a bomb at the British, was hanged in 1908 with a copy of the Bhagavadgita in his hand. According to Agehananda Bharati, Tilak chose to use the text of the Gita out of many equally didactic ones, 'because of its chauvinist underpinnings'.[40] The text became an important element in nationalist ideology.

The concept of karmayoga was further popularized by such national figures such as Aurobindo Ghose, M. K. Gandhi, Vinobe Bhave, K. M. Munshi, and S. Radhakrishnan, all of whom wrote commentaries on the Gita. S. Radhakrishnan wrote that the duty of the truly religious man was to work for the betterment of the world and Pandit Malaviya had given himself to that work:

> The truly religious man is not the man who gets to the top of the hill, for all time; who gets away from parts of life. He wants to live in this world and reduce the sufferings of this world. Even as Shri Krishna . . . came down to earth, tried to rectify the wrong, tried to remove inequalities and the injustices, tried to raise the world to a higher plane, we also, if we are of ethical and religious feeling, we suffer the times of liberation under which many people are born germs; we feel that those things are our own and we go there and try to remove whatever we can. That is the work which we are expected to do. And when Malaviya took up this problem of raising our country from slavery to freedom, from spiritual ignorance to some kind of spiritual enlightenment, he tried to remove all these technical difficulties and defects which we suffer. He tried to throw himself into the work of the world.[41]

Karmayoga was regarded as a spiritual path, which called for self-sacrifice for the good of the nation. This was a radical new concept in the history of Hinduism. While the importance of performing one's duty was not a

40 Ibid., p. 275.

41 S. Radhakrishnan at the birth centenary of Mahamana Malaviya, 25 December, 1961, cited in Dar and Somaskandan, *History of BHU*, p. 853.

new idea, the idea of sacrificing oneself for the good of the nation was clearly the result of a modern interpretation of the Gita in response to nationalism.

The concept was an important one, and one which was very similar to the reinterpretation of the Qur'an by Syed Ahmed Khan, which made it a godly duty for Muslims to take positions at the helm of worldly affairs and knowledge. The concept of karmayoga made a spiritual path out of political and social activism, out of work in the worldly realm. The example of Arjuna's devotion to his individual duty was also important in providing a means of accommodating the dominant western ideology of individualism. As Agehananda Bharati has argued, the modern interpretation of the Gita transformed the traditional goal of union with the infinite into the 'infinite value' of the human individual:

> Since the Indian Renaissance transplanted the Western notion of the value and dignity of the individual into the language of Indian modernity, the monistic doctrine of the *Vedanta*, the most highly prestigious philosophy of India's intellectual leadership for about a thousand years, had to be drastically modified. The interpretational focus was shifted from the canonical, monistic texts and their commentaries to noncanonical literature, particularly the *Bhagavadgita*. Here, the individual remained intact, its absorption into the brahman being presented as secondary, and slightly inferior choice. The man of the Indian Renaissance can identify with Arjuna and he can neglect those passages which represent canonical, quietistic stream which submerged the individual, as it were, before it could acquire the value and the dignity humanism had generated, not alongside the Judaeo-Christian tradition but *against* it.[42]

The principle of karmayoga gave legitimacy not only to the politics of nationalism, but also to participation in the modern secular world. As S. Radhakrishnan wrote, 'The Gita is interested in the process of redeeming the world,'[43] and it urges us 'to live in the world and save it.'[44]

The idea of karmayoga came to be a driving force at BHU. As the independence movement took hold among the elites in India, the University, as the first university operated by Indians alone, was a beacon of the modern ideal of nationalism and of modernity itself. Indian intellectuals located the heart of modernity in the University, where modernity was associated with the spirit of inquiry and the scientific method. Members of the University, desiring to embrace modernity, while at the same

42 Bharati, 'The Hindu Renaissance', p. 287.
43 S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy,* Vol. 1, p. 532.
44 Ibid., p. 67.

time remaining grounded in their culture, were attracted to the nationalist interpretation of karmayoga. The University officials encouraged the propounding of the idea by the institution of the Sunday Gita 'sermons' in which sacrificial service on behalf of others was often emphasized. While the university members were not enthusiastic about these congregational meetings, the ideal of service to the country became a theme on the campus during the years before independence:

> Before the Benaras Hindu University was started, there were few institutions in the country where students received instruction in the Hindu religion. The Government institutions followed a policy of neutrality in religion and did not consider it their duty to inculcate love of India and of service to the motherland in the minds of the youth of the country. So the first and foremost urge towards the foundation of the Benaras Hindu University was given by a feeling of Dharma and Desha-Bhakti—Religion and Patriotism.[45]

The nationalist interpretation of the Gita combined religion and patriotism in the theme of karmayoga. Students of BHU often carried copies of the Gita with them as a sign of commitment to nationalism and self-sacrifice. They formed a social service organization, the Seva Samiti.[46] University members began to associate the profession of teaching with karmayoga. Pandit Malaviya who had worked selflessly for the creation of BHU was perhaps the greatest proponent of the idea of teaching as a manifestation of sacrificial service.

Pandit Malaviya and others often referred to their work at the University as work of selfless-service, or karmayoga. Pandit Malaviya wrote that selfless service was the essence of Hindu religion:

> Another predominant injunction of the Hindu scriptures is one which is so urgently needed at present for producing real benefactors of society, viz., unselfish action. No teaching is more emphatic in the vast body of Hindu sacred literature than the effacement of self. It is the burden of the 'Lord's Lay'—the Bhagavadgita—which is justly regarded as the essence of Hindu scripture.[47]

The University, to Pandit Malaviya, was a means of serving his religion through selfless devotion to the propagation of knowledge. The field of education, even western education, was not a mere profession to Pandit Malaviya; it was his karmayoga. Pandit Malaviya's selfless work for the

45 V. A. Sundaram, *Alma Mater: Benaras Hindu University* (Banaras: BHU, 1940), p. 69.
46 *Central Hindu College Magazine,* Vol. 22, 1 May 1922, No. 5, p. 252.
47 Malaviya, *Prospectus of a Proposed Banaras Hindu University.*

University inspired professors of BHU to adopt the same idea of teaching as a sacrificial act. The pay scale at BHU was lower than at British institutions, yet many well-qualified professors chose to teach at the University and accept less salary. Through the years of the independence movement, when the University had difficulties with its funding, teachers would work for months without pay. There was a general atmosphere of sacrificial service at the University, which deterred complaints and pay strikes. The professors at the University came to regard their work as a holy occupation, requiring sacrifice, not as a profession that guaranteed the fruit of financial success. While salaries were sufficient to meet family needs, they were not of the measure for a professor to even consider rich clothes or furnishings. The life of a professor was dignified but simple. Teaching, not only theology classes, but other subjects, became an act of karmayoga. The idea of karmayoga, which accommodated both nationalist and Hindu revivalist sentiments, was an important factor as Brahmans and non-Brahmans assumed the role of the European professors in the University.

The assumption of the role of professor by Indians was a significant step in the movement towards independence. The professors in British colleges in India were largely Europeans. Principals of colleges were also exclusively Europeans. To obtain a position in the British universities in India, alongside the British professors, was considered a high honour. As more Indians partook of western education in India and travelled to England to complete their studies, the number of Indians qualified to fill the shoes of the British professors grew. The growth of independent colleges and changes in legislation also gradually expanded the opportunities for the Indians in the field of higher education. In light of the earlier dominance of Europeans in the field, the position of professor was given a high status among the possible fields of employment in India.

While the profession of teaching was not at all confined to the Brahmans, the position was particularly amenable to the Brahman pandits. In the colonial situation of India in the first part of the century, many Brahman students who would have traditionally turned to a guru for their education, sought to obtain a British education so that they could find employment in the service of the Raj, with British-owned companies, or as independent professionals in law and medicine. These were not the children of the aristocratic families of India and therefore sought employment as a means to help sustain their extended families. Western influence on India had created new means of acquiring status; the

Indian Civil Service, professorships, and the professions of law and medicine offered both employment and relative high status for Brahmans and others with an education. Young men began to move away from traditional family occupations. To the sons of Brahman fathers, the prospect of spending their lives performing rituals and saying prayers seemed backward in comparison to the attractions of the professions of the proclaimed enlightened education of the ruling British. They ceased to study the Vedas and began to partake of British education. This shift was not always looked upon favourably, as was expressed in an article in the University magazine, the *Central Hindu College Magazine:*

> To a true Hindu, his whole life is meant for education, i.e. perfect realization . . . . Hence the Hindu in ancient times was not anxious for the various forms of the so-called high education of the present day, as organized by Universities and imparted at Colleges . . . . In modern times, the ideal of education has changed, rather lowered.[48]

To others the benefits and exigencies of progress and nationalism, as well as the practical concerns of making a living, far outweighed adherence to the patterns of the past. Raja Rampal Singh, as chairman of the Committee of the Education Conference held in Lucknow on 18 January 1916, argued that it was now necessary for the country to embrace British education:

> In technical, industrial and agricultural [education], we are still in our infancy. No economic development can take place without these lucrative branches of learning . . . . There was a time when knowledge was sought for its own sake at the hands of the Rishis of antiquity, but these days are no longer existence. In these days when economic struggles are going on all the world over, amongst its nation for supremacy, no education can be thought important in its effectiveness which has not a commercial value.[49]

The nationalist interpretation of karmayoga helped to incorporate the idea of teaching, not only traditional subjects, but British subjects as well, as a valid occupation for Brahmans whose families had traditionally earned their livelihoods by performing priestly duties. For Brahmans, the field of education was an ideal position.

48 An Educationalist [pen name], 'The Hindu Idea of High Education', *Central Hindu College Magazine*, Vol. 22, No. 3. 1 March 1922.

49 Raja Rampal Singh, 'Raja Rampal Singh in Speech as Chairman of the Committee of the Education Conference at Lucknow, 18 January 1916', *Leader*, 23 Jan. 1916, p. 6, Nehru Memorial Library.

In the University, the image of the guru merged with the British role of the professor, creating an accommodation of the traditional Brahman role in the colonial setting. It is well known that many of the learned pandits of Banaras of this century have taught at BHU. The endeavour to create the modern institution of the University, however, was outside the realm of traditional Brahman dharma or duty. For Brahmans, the revered profession of teaching was considered compatible to their perceived traditional roles in society as repositories of wisdom and learning. The idealized, traditional Brahman was said to have memorized one or more of the Vedas, or was learned in other branches of sacred knowledge. The Brahmans traditionally imparted their knowledge to their sons, or as gurus, to small groups of twice-born boys in *gurukuls* (literally families of the gurus). The master of the gurukul was referred to as the *kulapati*, the father of the family. The vocabulary and the imagery of the gurukul was maintained at BHU as the University was often compared to a gurukul and the Vice Chancellor often referred to officially as the kulapati. The professors were addressed by students as guru*ji* and were accorded similar gestures of respect as traditional gurus and elders; when students appeared before their professors, they knelt and touched the feet of the professor. The role of the professor fitted very well for the Brahmans. But a great shift occurred in the University setting in the subject matter that Brahmans were imparting to their students and in the characteristics of their students. No longer were Brahmans teaching the Vedas; they were now teaching English literature and history, mathematics, and science. The students of the Brahmans were not personally selected Brahman youth, but students from all castes and even from different religions who had been accepted on terms on their passing a university entrance exam. The occupation of the professor expanded the field of expertise of the Brahman, from theology to the secular fields of modern science and technology. But the profession served as a levelling field. Non-Brahman professors were given the same respect as Brahman professors; they were also respectfully addressed as guru. The idea of karmayoga played a role in this development, as did other ideas of the Hindu renaissance, which were popular at BHU.

The ideas of the Hindu renaissance were important to the sense of shared Hindu identity at the University. The renaissance concepts, derived from the Orientalist and nationalist interpretations of Hindu tradition, defied particularization. They were not the possession of a single caste or sect. As Agehananda Bharati wrote, 'the parlance of the Hindu Renaissance de-emphasizes ritual, caste, and 'superstitions' and it fre-

quently plays down religion.'[50] In a time when Hindu leaders, such as Pandit Malaviya, were attempting to uplift and unify Hindus under a single banner, renaissance ideas such as karmayoga provided a generalized, non-exclusive, interpretation of Hinduism. The idea that Hinduism was a single religion, as propounded by Orientalists, Annie Besant, and Swami Vivekananda was itself a construction of the renaissance. The selection of Annie Besant's Sanatana Dharma textbooks over Sanskrit texts for use in religious instruction at the University was symptomatic of a movement in renaissance thinking away from specialized knowledge to more accessible, non-intellectual, and all-embracing ideas. The concept, suggested by Ramakrishna, and popularized by Swami Vivekananda, that Hinduism was a tolerant religion which taught that all religions were true, was never before a prominent idea in Hinduism. But among the diverse members of the University, such ideas provided a common ground for group identity and for inspiration in the independence movement. Ideas vaguely based upon the contents of ancient Sanskrit texts and given an elevated status by both nationalists and European scholars had a powerful effect on the perceptions of Hindu tradition. At BHU Hinduism became a modern religion, one which could accommodate both ancient tradition and scientific learning. As C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar wrote:

> Deriving from the past, what is essential for a carefully designed future and living in the present by way of assimilation of the best of the East and the West that was the message which was taught to us not only by Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, but remarkably enough by Shri Ramakrishna Paramhamsa and Swami Vivekananda amongst others.[51]

Hinduism itself was interpreted as a scientific religion. But the Renaissance ideas themselves were taken as givens, not subject to analytical scrutiny. The elusive, non-textual and non-systematic quality of the ideas made them almost immune from criticism. The ideas were regarded as profound truth; to challenge them would be to tear down the very edifice of a modern Hindu tradition that the English-speaking western-educated Indians were involved in constructing. The very diffuseness of the ideas, their in-exactness, their lack of a traditional

50 Bharati, 'The Hindu Renaissance', p. 272.

51 C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, cited by Kishore Gandhi and R. C. P. Sinha in 'The Evolution and Development of Banaras Hindu University—A Promise to Keep', *In the Spirit of the Mahamana: Platinum Jubilee Commemoration*, Vol. 1. (Varanasi: BHU, 1992), p. 14.

textual context, and their seeming transcendence of a historical context, made them all the more powerful in creating the perception of a homogenous Hinduism.

While the generality and all-embracing qualities of the Renaissance ideas shielded them from criticism and close scrutiny, it could also be argued that these same qualities worked against the construction of a totalitarian ideology. There was an element of eclecticism in the Renaissance ideas and openness to 'eternal truths' of other religions which effectively barred expressions of bigotry. As Hari Shankar Singhania wrote of the ideas of Pandit Malaviya, that Hinduism had an 'innate tolerance', which was also the quality of modern science:

> Although Pandit Malaviyaji was orthodox, in the conventional sense, in his attire and daily chores, he was at the same time orthodox in the truest Vedantic sense. Hinduism to him was not one among many other religions. He found in it all the elements synthesized, an intrinsic togetherness, any harm to one will hurt all. Beings on earth—humans, animals and plants—all are interrelated and all in a lesser or greater degree subject to the laws of changeability and transitoriness. The world view, then, cannot be stagnant, and the result of this attitude implied an innate tolerance towards other view points and ready acceptance, not a repulsion, of new ideas. This is also the modern scientific view, which Pandit Malaviyaji gave to BHU in the form it was established.[52]

One of the most common expressions of Hindu renaissance thinking was 'All religions are one'. Illustrative of this thought at BHU, one Hindu professor, K. P. Singh, kept copies of two small books, *Thus Spoke Muhammed* and *Thus Spake Christ* on his desk. When asked about the books, Professor Singh said, 'These are very precious books. They would remove much understanding. I also have a copy of the Qur'an. I do not find anything there that goes against Hindu religion. Gandhi said that all religions are branches of the same tree.'[53] A Muslim staff member of the University, in similar manner, said that he believed that Rama was a prophet of Allah. Communalism in the sense of hatred against Muslims was not accepted at the University, as according to Pandit Malaviya, it went against the very principles of both religion and nationalism. The call for a Hindu nation was not the call of the Hindu renaissance. During the years of the Indian independence movement, it was not the call of the University. The aversion to coercion that prevented the enforcement of compulsory religious instruction in Hinduism at the University also

52 Hari Shankar Singhania, *In the Spirit of the Mahamana: Platinum Jubilee Commemoration*, Vol. 1(Varanasi: BHU, 1992), p. 239.

53 K. P. Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.

pre-empted any attempt at group indoctrination. No one was forced to attend religious classes, or the Sunday Gita lectures. No one at the University was required to adhere to certain ideas or practices. The University did not engage in any systematic ideological indoctrination or discipline. The University, with its vague, undefined, and unorganized Hinduism was not capable of being a centre for religious totalitarianism that necessitated the exclusion of others.

It was the intention of the founders of BHU that religion would be used as a powerful tool. The British hoped that religious education at the University would inspire loyalty. The princes and orthodox looked to religion instruction as a means of maintaining a traditional social order and that privileged their positions in society. It was the plan of Pandit Malaviya to thoroughly indoctrinate the students in the sanatana dharma interpretations of Hindu tradition by introduction of compulsory religious instruction, in giving regular recitations of religious stories, and by instituting a form of Sunday church-going. But these western methods of imparting doctrinal religion did not work on the campus. The need to produce a religion which was acceptable to the diverse community of Hindus, represented at the campus, forced the University to make concessions. The personal practice of religion could also not be enforced. Moreover, systematic doctrines could not be imposed on Hindus of differing views. A single, well-defined tradition would have been too exclusive. The fluid ideas of the Hindu renaissance, vaguely based on ancient scriptures, but relevant to the modern situation were much more appropriate to the University setting. They were not confined to a particular tradition; they were diffuse and did not constitute a coherent religious system. The fact that the ideas were seen as rooted in the ancient tradition both shielded them from criticism and gave them validity in the eyes of the modern western educated Hindu. The ideas did not conflict with modernism; in fact, the interpretation given to karmayoga supported individualism and active participation in the secular world. Unstructured and not subjected to analytical scrutiny, the ideas helped to foster a shared sense of identity and purpose at BHU during the pre-independence years. They were a vital element of nationalism, inspiring many acts of selfless service for the greater good. In the absence of an aggressive Hindu ideological platform, standardized religious creeds, and unifying religious rituals and practices, religion still thrived at BHU. As the next chapter will argue, the sense of being Hindu, which was developed at the University, was so broad that it encompassed many elements that would normally be regarded as falling outside the realm of religion.

CHAPTER SIX

In the Temple of Learning: The Cultural and Academic Atmosphere of BHU

In the years between the creation of BHU in 1915 and the coming of independence in 1947, the period covered by this study, BHU revelled in its difference from British universities. The ways in which the University was defined as Hindu were multiple, but they were not based on a common set of religious beliefs. There were many elements to what was described as the 'Hindu' atmosphere of the University. The geographical location of the University in the holy city of Varanasi placed the institution within a sacred geography. The adoption of the Puranic theme of the beneficent Hindu raja giving a generous gift to a poor Brahman transformed the unpleasant tale of the acquisition of the site for BHU into a religious myth. The association of BHU with the Goddess Saraswati, and the imparting of knowledge situated the University on the path to immortality. The inclusion of the College of Theology and courses of instruction in traditional Hindu subjects set the University apart from other British universities. The architecture of the University, the simple demeanour and lifestyle of the faculty, the clothes of the students, the food, and even time made the University Hindu. It was not a single dogma, or catechism which united the students of the University, but a loose and flexible 'Hinduness'. While the University arose as part of the movement to unite the Hindus of India, the 'Hindu' in BHU, constructed upon difference, was as much a modern development as the University itself.

CULTURAL ATMOSPHERE

Hindu temple spires punctuated the view of the campus of BHU. The temple spires, though, belonged not to temples. Pandit Malaviya had the University classroom buildings designed to resemble Hindu temples. Pandit Malaviya's ideas for the campus architecture were brought into reality by the work of Frank Lishman, consulting architect to the UP

government, Rai Bahadur Ganga Ram, honorary Chief Engineer of the University, and Jwala Prasad, a member of the Indian Service of Engineers.[1] Among the first buildings completed on the Nagwa campus in 1921, the Arts College, and Physics and Chemistry buildings were constructed using elements of temple architecture. The main entrances to the buildings consisted of pillared porches, characteristic of temples. The main entry rooms, in the manner of temples, were surmounted by *pidhas* (pyramidal roofs) and *sikharas* (spires). Ornate porches, featuring corbelled arches, fronted the wings of the buildings. On the corners of the buildings were *chhatris* (small, pillared pavilions topped by domes). There were *chhajja* (balconies) projected from the walls on cantilevered brackets. The hostels, the first built with a donation from Jughal Kishore Birla, featured similar architectural elements, but differed in that they lacked the temple entry porches and the pyramidal roofs with spires.

The colleges were designed as 'temples of learning', while the hostels took the form of royal residences. The hostel rooms were small, designed for the use of two students, but they all opened onto balconies. High ceilings and windows provided natural ventilation and light. The rooms were sparsely furnished. In keeping with Brahmanical prescriptions for an austere brahmachari lifestyle, the beds were hard, consisted of a wooden platform covered with a thin cotton mattress. The feature of the hard beds was distinguished as a 'Hindu' element of the University.[2] While the students lived simply within their walls, the buildings were palatial.

The combination of the simple lifestyle and grandeur of the architecture of the campus are looked upon as truly illustrative of ancient Indian culture. In an article in the BHU *Magazine* on the accounts of the early Chinese visitors to India, Yuan-chwang and Fa-hien, the author writes of the continuity of Indian tradition:

> The Indian mind is very conservative and sticks to tradition with a peculiar tenacity. And it is no wonder that we find that there has been very little change in the character of the people from the time the Pilgrims saw them till today. The Brahmans and the Kshatriyas of the time of Yuan-chwang are 'clean-headed and unostentatious.' They are pure and simple, as the Indians even now are, and very frugal. But this does not mean that the kings had no love of pomp and

1 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Council, No. 6,' p. 143 and 'Minutes of the Council, No. 8,' p. 296, *BHU Minutes*, Vol. 1, July 1916–June 1917.
2 Kanchanlata Sabbaravala, a former student in the Women's College, interview, 16 September 1997.

grandeur. The people had a taste for decoration which was evident in everything, whether it was their body, buildings, or their speech; ornamentation was everywhere.[3]

While some of the members of the University Society had protested the grandeur of the plans, Pandit Malaviya believed they were important in helping to raise the esteem of the Hindu students. Pandit Malaviya had originally desired that all the sikharas would be surmounted by burnished *kalasha*s, so that the campus would shine brilliantly in the light of the rising and setting sun. But the other members of the University Society, due to budgetary concerns, convinced Pandit Malaviya that the campus could do without the shine.[4]

The colours of the campus were, however, considered distinctively Hindu. The buildings of the campus were all painted in the auspicious hues of yellowish-red and reddish brown, designated variously as *gairika*, *kashaya*, saffron or ochre. Some say that the colour in its various manifestations is derived from red ochre found in mountainous districts and rocky areas. The colour is regarded as a symbol of self-restraint and renunciation and is the colour prescribed for persons such as monks and nuns who renounce worldly pleasures. The colour was considered appropriate for the University, which was referred to as a temple of learning, and whose students, ideally, were to be engaged in the brahmachari lifestyle of celibacy and devotion to pious study. The entire campus, with its temple architecture, auspicious colours, and its symbolic design, all contributed to the Hinduness of BHU.

The University was likened to a traditional forest hermitage where the guru and his students lived together. While the original cultivated land was not forested, trees and gardens were planted, creating the wooded atmosphere of University, as it exists presently. The entire body of the institution was designated a gurukul, a school or family of the guru. The vice chancellor was given the title of kulapati or father of the school. Pandit Malaviya, whose term as vice chancellor spanned most of the period of this study, provided the exemplar model of a guru. As S. Somaskandan, who knew the University's founder, commented: 'Malaviya was a great saint. The atmosphere was absolutely cordial and dharma could be seen—at least as long as Malaviya was alive. The University

3 Ramakant Pandey, 'India of the Chinese Pilgrims', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 30, 1930, p. 127.

4 Parmanand, *Mahamana*, Vol. 1, p. 437.

was a big family, a gurukula, and Malaviya was the guru.'[5] Pandit Malaviya involved himself in all the affairs of the University, from raising funds to inspecting the student hostels. While Pandit Malaviya was known to be very compassionate to his students, he also insisted on adherence to campus rules.

The campus regulations served to create and maintain the Hindu atmosphere on the campus. Smoking and drinking alcohol, considered imported western vices, were forbidden on campus. *Paan* shops, very popular in Banaras, also were not allowed on the campus.[6] Hunting and fishing, also believed to be the pastimes of Europeans, were forbidden on the campus.[7] According to the university regulations, there was to be no meat on the campus. Exceptions were made for the few European professors like Charles King of the Engineering College. There was one non-veg. hostel at the end of the campus for Europeans. However, the students who wanted to eat meat apparently did find means to do so. As a former student recalled, 'The Muslim boys at BHU went to the railway station if they were crazy after meat. So did the Hindu boys, even the girls sometimes.'[8] According to A. K. Narain, the Hindu engineering students complained, 'How can engineers not eat meat?' and they cooked meat secretly.[9] The University regulations, while occasionally broken, enforced a vegetarian diet upon all the students in the hostels. The common diet allowed students of different castes to dine together. While students could set up separate kitchens if they desired, the general tendency was against exclusive caste dining. A common vegetarian diet of lentils, rice, and vegetables, was identified as the Hindu diet at the University. While it was most likely true that the majority of the families of the students and faculty avoided meat, it would not have been uncommon for many to eat chicken or mutton. The vegetarian diet conformed most closely to that of Brahman communities.

The University, rejecting western vices of meat eating, smoking, and drinking, also rejected western norms of clothing for both the University students and the faculty. The combination of simplicity of lifestyle and grandeur of architecture at the University was looked on as truly illustrative of ancient Indian culture. There was no particular dress code for the University. Most students wore dhotis, or kurta-pajamas, and saris.

5 S. Somaskandan, interview, Banaras, 2 July 1995.
6 *Benaras Hindu University Calendar 1922–25*, p. 419.
7 Ibid.
8 Shanti Sadiq Ali, interview, New Delhi, 18 September 1997.
9 A. K. Narain, interview, Banaras, September 1997.

It was said that half the students came to class without shoes or chappals.[10] But bare feet were associated with the culture of ancient India. In describing the habits of the righteous Brahmans of the past, one BHU students wrote, 'They did not usually wear shoes.'[11] The attire of the University was not looked upon with shame, but instead with pride as a sign of Hindu culture. A contrast was made between the simple, inexpensive clothes worn by many of the BHU students and teachers, and the stiff, collared suits of the government universities. Again, it was the engineering students of the University who were the exception.[12]

The Engineering College was, by reputation, a place apart. Charles King, the first principal, had set the tone for the College. King had been a professor at the Bengal Government's Engineering College at Sibpur (Calcutta) before Pandit Malaviya arranged for his release. King came to the University in 1919 to oversee the Department of Engineering. A second Englishman, L. D. Couselant, was also brought to the department. Couselant had been head of the Department of Engineering at the Technical College in Sunderland for twenty years. He had prepared the students for University of London engineering examinations.[13] The Engineering College was to have a distinct English flavour. Besides King's insistence on painting the buildings of the College gleaming white instead of ochre, he had signs bearing the slogan 'Work is Worship' pasted on the walls of the College, introducing his own particular kind of religion among the Engineering students. The students themselves were considered a superior lot. As the number of seats in the Engineering College was limited, the students generally entered the College with records higher than those of the other students of the University. They had a reputation on campus of being both brighter and richer. The fees were higher in the Engineering College, requiring students to have more money. The dress of the Engineering College was strikingly different as well. The engineering boys came to the class wearing suits and ties. As one student related, 'If you were formal, smarter, everyone said, "Oh, you are from Engineering." '[14] But allowances were made for British eccentricity. Engineering was a western import necessary to the functioning of modern India. In this case, the University claimed the subject,

10 K. P. Singh, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
11 Ramakant Pandey, 'India of the Chinese Pilgrims', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 30, 1930, p.127.
12 Ibid.
13 Dar and Somaskandan, *History of BHU*, p. 465.
14 Ibid.

as well as the accoutrements of the westernized department, as its own.

The general tone of the University, however, rejected formality and stiff-necked western attitudes. When Aligarh Muslim University was criticized at BHU, the criticisms did not have anything to do with Islam. AMU was criticized for maintaining western standards of dress and class consciousness. A Muslim staff member, Badruddin, a former student and lifetime resident of BHU, explained the contrast between the two universities:

> Nobody cares about dress here. Aligarh is very particular about dress . . . Aligarh is class conscious. But class is how rich you are, your family [position], it is about your tie matching your suite. It is not about discipline. They call this discipline. They are not well learned. There is no communal feeling there. They are very much after aristocracy—they are very civilized. But this [BHU] is a rural university. You will not get such polished etiquette. It is not a fashionable university. It is for the rural people, not the very rich . . . . There is no communal feeling—no occasion—it is not there.[15]

Badruddin, who knew both AMU and BHU well, said that before independence, communalism was not a factor at either of the universities, but clothes were. BHU prided itself in being different from the westernized universities. Clothes, manner of speaking, food, even how one sat were assertions of Indian autonomy during the independence movement. Humility was claimed as the crowning glory of the BHU faculty, while arrogance was seen as one of the qualifications of a western-style professor. A student wrote of his first day in history class at BHU and the initial shock occasioned by the demeanour and manner of the professor:

> I cannot afford to disremember that fine sunny day in August, 1924, when as a student of History, I rushed down the crowded southern stairs of the Arts College to the 'First Year Fool's History Class' on the ground floor pushing and shouldering other class-mates to ensure a front seat, because the subject was very popular, the number of students exceptionally enormous . . . . Those of us who could not get through contented ourselves by managing to squat huddled up together on the low wooden platform around and sometimes under the professor's table. . . . A little pause, a mild hush, a whispering stir and every one was on his legs with an unmusical rattling of the auto-lift chairs to greet our Professor. And then appeared against all our imaginative impressions of a professor, an uncommonly tall-statured, emaciated figure with no demeanor of a traditional professor with a fine suit, golden frame glasses, affected dignity and an impression of deep learning surreptitiously stamped on his forehead. All our expectations were

15 Badruddin, interview, Banaras, September 1997.

foiled. Our Professor was clad in a simple dhoti, a close-collared coat and a felt cap- an unusual personality in a University of world-wide repute. Our despair reached its climax when he unceremoniously put off his right shoe and stretched his right knee on the table and began his lecture on the Rashtrakutas in correctly accented and rightly intonated English with his low muffled voice, spicing his lecture with smiles and craning forward gracefully every now and then keeping his right hand pointing finger actively engaged when he quoted some Sanskrit slokas.[16]

The professor, Pandit Ganga Prasad Mehta, who served the University as a lecturer in the Department of History from 1917 until 1933, and from 1933 until his retirement in 1952, as Registrar of BHU, came to be held in great esteem by the students for the very attributes which at first startled the new students who came to the University expecting all professors to be moulded according to the western model.

Simplicity and kind-heartedness on the part of BHU professors, poverty and respectfulness on the part of BHU students, were held up with pride against the western mould of higher education. The aloofness of western professors was contrasted with the geniality of the professors at BHU. The residential nature of the campus allowed a close contact between teachers and students. Students were frequent guests at the home of professors. As one student remarked, 'There was a vague feeling that the aloofness of teachers would not be in keeping with the spirit of the University. Therefore, the general trend was to bring about close relationships between the teachers and the students.'[17] Teachers took time to be with their students.

Time was rarely rushed at BHU. Moving according to the rituals of the day, time in Banaras could be considered as 'event' time. The activities of the day, for upper caste Hindus, focused around the religious rituals of the day, beginning with a ritual dip in the Ganga in the morning followed by puja (prayers and worship) at a temple or home shrine. Students at the University, like many of the residents of the city, rose before dawn. *Nashta* (breakfast) of milk and chapattis, and sometimes sweets such as *jaleebi*s was the first meal of the day. The students took their baths at wells dug in front of the hostels. There were no inside bathrooms. Indoor plumbing could have been installed, but Pandit Malaviya did not consider it Hindu. It has been only in the last twenty-five years

16 Written by an anonymous member of the erstwhile Bull Association, BHU, 'Pandit Ganga Prasad Mehta: Reminiscences', *BHU Old Boys Association—Calcutta 1963–64* (Varanasi: BHU, 1964), p. 28.

17 Gyanchand, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library.

that bathrooms have been added to the hostels. The BHU students had a leisurely morning, having time to do puja if they liked, or to take a morning walk. Assi ghat, the nearest ghat on the Ganga, was often a destination. Former students, who no longer dare to bathe there, said the ghat was once a splendid place to pass time in the morning.[18] Classes began at ten o'clock, with students summoned to their seats by the ringing of a brass bell outside the colleges. There were no clocks in the classrooms.[19] The idea of living by clock time was still a foreign idea to most of the members of the University. Appointments were rarely made according to an exact time. Professors would say, for instance, 'Come see me in the morning or Come see me in the evening.' Few students owned watches.[20] One former student of BHU said:

> We did not need a clock. We could ask someone what time it was. And there was a sense of time earlier. We could tell what time it was by the sun. Very few people had watches . . . . There was one clock on the front of Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya Hall. It was for the pandit boys, but it was built rather late. Perhaps because the pandit boys were too poor to have watches. It does not work . . . . Nevertheless students were very punctual. Teachers commanded respect, even awe and the students came to class on time. They knew what time it was.[21]

Time at BHU apparently flowed according to the rhythm of the day; there seemed to be little need for mechanical timepieces.

There was no clock tower at BHU. At the other British universities, the clock tower was the most conspicuous architectural feature of the campus. The campus of the Bombay University, for example, built in the style of European architecture of the thirteenth century, featured the 280 feet tall Rajabai Clock Tower. The clock face, sixteen feet in diameter, was illuminated by electric lights.[22] A clock tower was also constructed at AMU in 1922.[23] But the clock tower was not a feature of Hindu architecture and was apparently dismissed as an unnecessary European adornment at BHU. When a former faculty member was asked why the University, like most western universities, did not have a central clock tower so that all the members of the University could walk according to a standard time, the reply was, 'No, no one thought of it. There should have

18 Hiralal Singh, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
19 A. K. Narain, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
20 K. P. Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.
21 Hiralal Singh, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
22 S. R. Dongerkery, *Memories of Two Universities* (Bombay: Manaktalas, 1966), p. 43.
23 Nizami, *History of AMU*, p. 89.

been one—with four faces, but no one thought of it.'[24] Clock time was western and few walked to it at BHU.

The time between the founding of the University in 1916 and independence in 1947 is considered the golden time of the University. Hindu students coming to the campus discovered a new pride in their Hindu heritage. A spirit of liberality and self-sacrifice dominated the atmosphere of the campus. It was a unique time, a time of sandhya,[25] a time between the darkness of colonialism and the sweet light of independence. The graduates of the University were touched by their time at BHU. The University fulfilled its task in providing batches of engineers, chemists, botanists, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and politicians, who played vital roles in the functioning of free India. Independence brought new challenges and problems to the University, but for the time covered in this study, the rather undefined, but all-pervasive Hinduness of the University, fostered a new-found identity and self-assurance in the members of the University. Becoming proud of their own traditions and lifestyles, they were able to set aside the standards imposed upon them by colonialism. The simplicity of lifestyle and grandeur of the architecture of the University were looked upon as truly illustrative of ancient Indian culture. A student who attended BHU in 1921–5 wrote that the vast expanse of the campus, the grandeur of the various colleges, the saintliness and patriotism of the professors left a deep and indelible impression on the minds of the students, who were convinced that in no respect were they in any way inferior to the alien rulers.[26] According to students at BHU, the humble ways of the University, combined with nobility of thought and intellect, were a major unifying factor and means of resistance to imperialism. As Dhanpat Singh, a former student wrote:

> The principle of 'Plain living and High thinking' held the field, and was emphasized by both precept and example, and by the over-riding need to forge and present unity to acquit ourselves worthily in the supreme cause of the emancipation of the country.[27]

BHU became known as one of major centres of Indian nationalism. The location of BHU in Banaras, the 'eternal city', the mythologizing of the origin of BHU lands, the association of the institution with the spiritual

24 K. P. Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.

25 *Sandhya* is the juncture of darkness and light, i.e., dawn and dusk. It is also the name of rituals performed at that time.

26 Dhanpat Singh, 'Reminiscences of My Students Days,' *BHU Old Boys Association—Calcutta 1963–64* (Banaras: BHU, 1964), pp. 48–9.

27 Ibid., p. 49.

quest for immortality were powerful means of constructing a resistant Hindu identity. The poverty, simple dress, and lack of western manners and polished etiquette, which had made Indians inferior in the eyes of the British, became symbols of strength and pride at BHU. The simplicity of lifestyle at the campus and the grandeur of the Hindu architecture were seen as truly illustrative of Indian culture. It was not simply difference, but pride in difference, which made resistance possible. It was not common religious doctrine, but saffron walls, sacred ground, simple clothes and bare feet, and the missing clock tower that coloured the atmosphere of the University 'Hindu'.

ACADEMIC ATMOSPHERE

BHU was meant to bring about a revival of Hindu learning and culture, as well as providing an excellent western education. The students were to be given the best of both worlds. They were to study the poetry of Kalidas alongside that of Shakespeare, the Hindu shastras alongside the scientific method. The teaching of the ancient scriptures, in addition to the knowledge of modern science, would remedy the influence of the soulless education offered in the existing British universities in India. The University would create a new kind of western-educated graduate, young men who were well grounded in the values and traditions of their own culture. The domination of western ideas and lifestyle among the educated of India would end. Higher education, tempered by religion, would produce a powerful effect upon its students. No longer bending low under the stigma of colonialism, the Indians, schooled in and proud of their own culture, would rise to their full stature.

Thus, modern India would benefit under her own cadre of Hindu leaders in all the fields of government, industry, commerce, and education. This was the plan and the hope of BHU. Hindus would re-create university education and render it their own. The Maharaja of Mysore, the Chancellor of BHU, summarized the challenge at the BHU Convocation of 1922:

> This University is a novel experiment in educational reconstruction. It seeks to conserve the vital and essential elements of Hindu learning and civilization, to adapt them to modern conditions and to make such enduring contributions to the solution of the world's problems and difficulties as India is fitted to make by her long experience and history.[28]

28 Maharaja of Mysore, 'Maharaja of Mysore—Chancellor of Benaras Hindu

But as this chapter shows, the process of adapting western education was complicated by various kinds of internalization of culture and by the expanding radius of shared history. Colonialism and the independence movement combined in the twentieth century to produce a period of historical dislocation. The relationships between traditional cultural forms on the one hand, and modern or western ones on the other, were in a state of flux. While the University authorities instituted a scheme of education that would bring about a synthesis of the modern and the traditional, the actual circumstances of the University did not evolve in the anticipated direction.

Oriental Learning and Theology Fail as Central Focus

The Colleges of Oriental Learning and Theology were hoped to be the pride of BHU. These colleges, along with the Hindu atmosphere of the campus, were considered the unique feature of the University.[29] The inclusion of these colleges was responsible for the support of the University by many Hindus, especially the more orthodox. For instance, the Sankaracharya of Kanchi, an important religious leader, saw the university's only valid goal was in enlivening and bringing dignity to traditional Hindu knowledge.[30] The Colleges of Oriental Learning and Theology were to offer religious guidance to the students, which would set BHU apart from the other secular universities. Unlike British universities, the two colleges awarded the traditional Hindu titles of scholarly accomplishment of *acharya* and *shastri*.

University—Convocation Address,' *Central Hindu College Magazine*, Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1922.

29 P. Seshadri, one of the BHU professors, wrote in *The Universities in India* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 7, 'Its special Hindu feature is perhaps limited to the existence of extensive Departments of Sanskrit Learning and Hindu Theology, but its sponsors have always at least aimed at the creation and maintenance of an effective Hindu atmosphere.'

30 In 'Sri Sankaracharya's Visit', *Leader* (Allahabad), 24 February 1935, p. 7, Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi was reported to say, 'This University imparts education in all subjects, spiritual and temporal. Further, the analytic and synthetic system of western education given here is highly useful in displaying to us in vividness the greatness of our ancient sciences codified as 18 Vidyas.' The article also stated that Sri Sankaracharya, warning against the rise of materialism and the loss of culture, said he was against academic and theoretical science and wanted practical science and dharma to be taught.

The Colleges of Oriental Learning and Theology shared classes and professors. All the professors were Brahmans.[31] In 1922–3 there were sixteen professors in the College of Oriental Learning who were also professors in the College of Theology. Only one professor, Vidyadhara Gouda, who taught Veda, was exclusively a member of the College of Theology. The College of Theology, also restricted to Brahman students, had departments of Karma Kanda, Veda Srauta, Purana and Itihasa, Dharma Shastra and Agama, Purvamimamsa, Vedanta, Nyayavaisesika, Sankya Yoga, and Jyautisa. The College of Theology was also responsible for the religious instruction of all the Hindu students of the University; two teachers were appointed for the entire campus.[32]

It was in the College of Oriental Learning that the effort to combine eastern and western knowledge was most pronounced. The College, open to all students, offered instruction in Veda Srauta, Dharmasastra and Agama, Purvamimamsa, Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya Vaisesika, Vyakarana, Kavya Sahitya, Jyautisa, Ayurveda, Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrita, Purana, and Itihasa, modern Indian languages, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, English, Pashatya Darsana, Ganita, Itihasa, Arthasastra, and Nitisastra. All the subjects were taught in Hindi or Sanskrit, though English was offered as an optional subject.[33] To encourage the enrolment in the Colleges of Oriental Learning and Theology, tuition, room and board, and even costs of hostel, electricity fees were provided free of charge for students.

There was a surprising lack of interest, though, among the students for Oriental Learning and Theology. In comparison with other subjects, traditional Indian subjects ranked poorly. In 1937, the enrolments according to colleges and departments included the following, in order of strength:[34]

The Arts College

English: 1273; Economics: 546; History: 479 ; Math: 462; Hindi: 365; Politics: 327; Philosophy: 208; Sanskrit: 131 students; Persian and Urdu: 81; Ancient Indian History and Culture: 39;

The Science College

Chemistry: 820; Physics: 556; Zoology 239; Botany: 235; Industrial

31 *BHU Calendar 1922–25*, pp. 1182f.
32 Ibid., p. 1182.
33 Ibid., pp.1180f
34 'Annual Meeting of the Court, No. 1, 27 November 1937,' *BHU Minutes,* Vol. 22 B, July to December 1937, pp. 562 ff.

Chemistry: 148; Pharmaceutical Chemistry: 33; Geology: 83;
Engineering College
Engineering 440; Mining and Metallurgy: 613
College of Oriental Learning: 364
Law College: 246
Women's College: 88
Teacher Training College: 69
College of Theology: 31

The Colleges of Oriental Learning and Theology, which were expected to be the most influential colleges of the University, were not the most well-attended colleges. The College of Theology had the lowest enrolment of all the colleges. The courses that offered specifically Indian topics did not attract the numbers of students as the more western-oriented courses. While the English department boasted 1273 students, the Sanskrit department had 131. The western-oriented Bachelor of Arts degree was the most sought after degree among the BHU students; English was the most popular subject. In 1946, little progress had been made towards changing the situation. The records of the University reported that concern was expressed for the state of Sanskrit studies:

Pandit Ram Vyas Jyotish speaking in Hindi said that many speakers spoke what they thought necessary but in his opinion none expressed any opinion on the real necessity of the University. It was the teaching of Sanskrit. He was sorry to find that Sanskrit did not receive sufficient attention.[35]

Another member, Mr Shrinivas, complained that the drastic reduction in the number of subjects taught in the Sanskrit department had been the cause of reduced enrolment in the department:

By reason of the reduction of one and half dozen subjects which were previously taught in the Sanskrit Department and by concentrating them in only four departments of study, the number of admissions to the Sanskrit College has been reduced to half their previous strength. Have the authorities paid any attention to the harm this caused to the institution?[36]

The number of students had indeed dropped during recent years, but in 1946, the College had regained students and, in fact, had more students than ever. The figures on the combined number of students in the College

35 *BHU Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Court,* No. 1 held on 1 December 1945 and of Special Meeting of the Court held on Sunday, 22 September 1946, p. 20.
36 Ibid., p. 39.

of Oriental Learning and Theology for previous years were produced for the Court:

1939–40: 390
1940–1: 383
1941–2: 391
1942–3: 323
1943–4: 350
1944–5: 393
1945–6: 394

Though the Colleges had only a gain of four students in six years, the University Court reasoned that since the number of students had risen, the other questions concerning Sanskrit education were of no consequence.[37] The University, whether due to apathy, lack of interest on the part of students, or ill-planning, failed to make the Colleges of Oriental Learning and Theology the central focus of intellectual endeavour at the University. Instead, modern western subjects became the major attraction of the University, especially for students from other areas of India.

The reason for the lack of popularity of Indology subjects was obvious. BHU could not escape the realities of colonialism and the influence of western ideas. Western subjects were considered modern and progressive. Sanskrit education and traditional occupations were considered 'old-fashioned'. BHU students did not want to be left behind. As one student during the early years remarked, the Colleges of Oriental Learning and Theology were for 'simpletons', the students not bright enough to master western subjects. Secondly, there was also the financial factor. The traditional degrees offered in the Colleges of Oriental Learning and Theology would not secure jobs for the graduates in government. A young man equipped with a BA had a much better chance of finding employment. Training in technological areas would secure even better positions. In a colonial situation, where the traditional roles of priests and pandits brought little income or esteem, students chose to pursue other occupations. Pandit Malaviya and the other administrators of BHU supported preparation in modern fields. A modern nation needed doctors, lawyers, teachers, historians, political scientists, research scientists, agriculturalists, engineers, and technological experts. While the specifically Indology subjects were never forsaken, it was instruction in engi-

37 Ibid., S. Radhkrishnan, Chair of the Court, concluded, 'The number has risen—hence the other parts of the question do not arise.'

neering and technology, which came to be the pride of the University. In 1941, Mr Godbole, the Principal of the College of Technology expressed the importance of these fields at the University:

> There are many who ask the authorities the question, 'What is it that the Benares Hindu University is doing which other Universities have not done in India?' The reply is, the various branches that form the Faculty of Technology in which in addition to the subjects included in the College of Technology, the subjects of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, the department of Mining and Metallurgy and the Institution of Agricultural Research are all included.[38]

While Pandit Malaviya and the other founders of the University had envisioned the Colleges of Oriental Learning and Theology be the guiding lights of BHU, their popularity paled in comparison to the western subjects.

The Scope of Indological Research

One of the goals of BHU was to bring about a merger between western and Indian knowledge. It was in the College of Oriental Learning that the effort to combine eastern and western knowledge was most pronounced. In the College, the teaching of modern science courses through the medium of Indian languages, in combination with an in-depth study of traditional subjects, was hoped to create a new kind of learning. Jyautisha (Astrology), for example, was taught in the traditional way of pandits, but efforts were made to combine the study with that of modern astronomy. An observatory and astronomical instruments were made available.[39] BHU was the first to try to combine the teaching of Ayurvedic medicine with principles of modern medicine. Anatomy and physiology were taught according to western models.[40] But it was eventually realized that the teaching of western subjects in Hindi or Sanskrit was too difficult. While the University had made efforts to produce scientific books in those languages, little progress was made. The science subjects were dropped from the College of Oriental Learning. Ayurvedic medicine was separated from western medicine when the Medical Institute was founded. Though the University gave upon the idea of incorporating western science into the College of Oriental

38 Godbole, 'Notes and News: The College of Technology College Day Celebration', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 6, 1941, p. 86.

39 Ibid., p. 1181.

40 A. K. Narain, interview, Banaras, September 1997.

Learning, it continued to encourage vigorous research, based on western lines, on Indological subjects.

The production of such works was an important goal of the University. In the colonial setting, where the most notable scholars of Indology were Europeans, the Indians had recognized that if they were to take control of their destinies, they could not leave the study of their culture and religion in the hands of others. The articles published in the BHU periodicals were evidence of the efforts undertaken at the University to engage in research. There were articles on Sanskrit and Hindu topics, such as 'Pathos in Sanskrit Literature';[41] 'Was Sanskrit a Spoken Language?';[42] and 'The Niranjani Poets of Hindi'.[43] Articles on cultural and religious topics included such titles as 'The Educational Samskaras of the Hindus';[44] and 'Atharvavedic Conception of the Motherland'.[45] The research produced by BHU was of varying quality.

Many of the papers produced at BHU on Indological subjects could be regarded as 'Hindu Renaissance' material. The research was concerned with presenting Hinduism in a modern light, using scientific terminology to support traditional ideas, or proving the antiquity of modern practices. The author of 'The Niranjani Poets of Hindi', P. D. Barthwal, for instance, sought to establish the legitimacy of Hindi as a national language by proving its antiquity.[46] Other articles sought to find support for their positions in ancient scriptures. 'The Educational Samskaras of the Hindus',[47] which cited many Sanskrit texts, purported to bring to light the traditional ways of education, while at the same time making a statement with regard to who was qualified to teach religion. According to the article, the only people qualified to teach Hindu religion were Brahmans of unsullied character. Articles such as 'The Age of the Earth from the Standpoint of Hindu Tradition' attempted to show the connection between the contents of ancient Sanskrit literature and

41 H. R. Krishnan, 'Pathos in Sanskrit Literature', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 30, 1930, pp.106–18.

42 A. B. Dhruva, 'Was Sanskrit a Spoken Language', *BHU Mag*azine, Vol. 30, 1930, pp. 188–210.

43 P. D. Barthwal, 'Niranjani Poets of Hindi', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 7, 1942, p. 11.

44 Raj Bali Pandey, 'The Educational Samskaras of the Hindus', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 5, 1940, pp. 13–51.

45 P. B. Pandey, 'Atharvavedic Conception of the Motherland', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 6, No. 2–3, 1942.

46 P. D. Barthwal, 'Niranjani Poets of Hindi', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 7 (1942), p. 11.

47 Raj Bali Pandey, 'The Educational Samskaras of the Hindus', pp. 13–51.

modern science and argued that modern science had yet to teach the heights of ancient Indian science. Concerning the discrepancy between the age of the Earth given by modern science and that of ancient texts, the author, a fifth-year chemistry student, wrote, 'It should not be forgotten that modern Science is not sufficiently advanced to be able to justify some of the assumptions behind too high estimates running up to 5,000 million years.'[48] Another author attempted to prove the higher figure given for the age of the Earth by Hindu tradition by using scientific evidence.[49] Professor P. B. Adhikari wrote an article for the *BHU Magazine*, in which he argued that teleology and science were not antagonistic to each other. As teleology provided value to science, the two complemented, even needed each other.[50] These articles, concerned with bridging the gap between modernity and tradition were illustrative of much of the Indological research of the University.

Many of the articles in the University publications could be classed as Hindu apologetics. As an example, the article 'Constructive Elements in the Philosophy of Radhakrishnan', argued that Radhakrishnan expressed the true essence of Hinduism. The author wrote, 'Toleration and reconciliation have been the spirit of Hindu religion.'[51] Radhakrishnan, recognized by many in the West as a distinguished scholar, spread the message that the spiritualism of India held the answers to the problems of the world. Radhakrishnan's message was published in the *Journal of BHU:*

> If the present world-convulsion is to emerge in a new and better world order, we must acquire a living faith in love and wisdom. Here again the Orient with its distinctive message of wisdom in education, of the need for quiet, the quiet not of inaction but of harmony, of faith in the ultimate which shine through the vast uncertainties hanging over the march of life can offer a corrective to the miscarriage of the world.[52]

The spreading of the benefits of Hinduism to the entire world was a

48 Susarla Raja, 'The Age of the Earth', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 30, 1930, p. 131.
49 R. S. Inamdar, 'Plant Life in the Past and the Age of the Earth', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 30, 1930, pp. 143f.
50 P. B. Adhikari, 'Mechanism and Teleology', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 30, Jan. 1030, No.1, p. 20.
51 Arwind U. Vasavad, 'Constructive Elements in the Philosophy of Radhakrishnan', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 7 (1942), p. 1.
52 S. Radhakrishnan, 'The 12th All-India Oriental Conference Welcome Address', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 8, p. 210.

common theme in articles in the BHU periodicals. An address of the Maharaja of Darbhanga, for instance, expressed it thus:

> I firmly believe that Hinduism—I use this word in a wide sense—has still enough vitality to reassert itself . . . . It now remains for us to invoke the blessings of Sri Viswanatha and pray that like the stream of Holy Ganga that flows below the flow of the stream of our thoughts may not lose its continuity and by fertilising this country it may mingle itself in the vast ocean of the thoughts of humanity.[53]

While the above articles and addresses could certainly be classified as products of the Hindu renaissance, they constituted only a small portion of the published material of the University. Although there was little success at BHU in creating anything that resembled a true synthesis of western empiricism and Hindu revelation and tradition, the varying degrees of success of both modes of knowledge in the different colleges of the University combined to create a very diverse intellectual environment.

INTELLECTUAL ATMOSPHERE

Evidence of this diversity of thought at BHU is readily apparent in the publications of the University. The University published its own periodical, which expressed the intellectual life of the University. The journal had its origins in Annie Besant's Central Hindu College. Before the transfer of the Central Hindu College to BHU, Annie Besant, Bhagavan Das, Lilian Edgar, and Upendranath Basu of the CHC, worked to establish a college journal, *The Central Hindu College Magazine*. Sri Prakasa later took charge of the magazine as editor, and passed it on to P. Seshadri in 1916, soon after the Central Hindu College was transferred to BHU.[54] In January 1925, the name of the periodical was changed to *BHU Magazine* and subsequently to *Journal of BHU*.[55] The magazine, which had formerly been the publication of the Central Hindu College, became the magazine of the entire University. The magazine editors, who were members of the BHU faculty, attempted to include both Sanskrit and Hindi articles.

The content of the periodicals published by the University from its founding and even after Independence covered a wide range of subjects

53 Maharaja Kameshwara Singh of Darbhanga, 'The 12th All-India Oriental Conference Inaugural Speech', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 8, 1943–44, pp. 213f.

54 *Central Hindu College Magazine*, Vol. 24, 1 Dec., 1924, No. 12, p. 346.

55 The journal is now called *Prajna*; its editor is Ram Mohan Pandey.

from campus news to pressing political issues such as articles on swaraj. Some examples include the lengthy explanation of the economic and social implications of establishing a village-based society written by B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya[56] and scientific articles such as 'The Jurassic Rocks of Cutch—Their Bearing on Some Problems of Indian Geology',[57] and 'On the Continuity of Convex Function.'[58] The publication featured articles by students and faculty members. The magazine featured transcribed addresses of the patrons of the University, the maharajas, along with the convocation addresses. The magazine published reports of important conferences, such as the All-India Oriental Conference, along with transcriptions of notable speeches. Book reviews were contributed, as well as occasional translations. The wide range of topics covered by the periodicals reflected the diversity of thought present at the University.

A number of the articles in the magazines were concerned with aspects of Hindu culture and religion, as has been discussed above. But the contrasting views on religious issues were tremendous. There was clearly no single, dogmatic approach to Hinduism. Nothing resembling a Hindu agenda emerges from the differing opinions. There were as many articles that criticized the method of the apologetic and the rhetoric of the Hindu renaissance as those that purported them. For instance, in the article 'Lord Balfour and the Foundation of Belief', the author rejects attempts to justify religious beliefs by unifying science and religion:

> From the standpoint of pure reason there is no possibility of justifying beliefs. They either lead to the endless causal series of the scientist or the utterly rational principle which is so dear to the theologian under the name of authority. It is for this reason that a recent writer has declared that faith is not knowledge but an attitude of the will. From the point of view of knowledge it is hopeless to try to justify faith. All rational justification serves only to confirm the charge against faith of destruction and superstition.[59]

Other articles criticized the basic ideas of the Hindu Renaissance. The

56 B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, 'The Parting of the Ways', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 31, No.1, pp.1–17.

57 Raj Nath, 'The Jurassic Rocks of Cutch—Their Bearing on Some Problems of Indian Geology', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 7 (1942), pp.147–61.

58 V. Ramaswami, 'On the Continuity of Convex Functions', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 7, 1942, pp. 177–81.

59 S. K. Maitra, 'Lord Balfour and the Foundation of Belief', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 30, 1930, p. 168f.

BHU Magazine published the presidential address of Professor A. R. Wadia of BHU which he delivered at the sixth session of the Indian Philosophical Congress held at Dacca on 20 December 1930. In his address, Professor Wadia made a full-fledged attack against the then existing state of philosophy in India. Philosophy had been very much influenced by the apologetic of the Renaissance and the professor believed that the outcome was anything but a true renaissance of Indian learning.[60] The author criticized the attempt to merge philosophical and religious thought, which made criticism impossible. The author went on to attack the modern Indian philosophers for refusing to be critical of dogmas and creeds, even making a creed out of philosophy, a creed 'too sacred to be questioned'. He even went so far as to question the motivation behind Gandhi's definition of Hinduism.

> Hinduism is the most difficult thing to define, and some of the most eminent Hindus have been content to define it in terms of birth or even negatively in some such terms as these: 'It is enough if you are born of Hindu parents and have not been converted to another faith;' It is no wonder therefore if for Gandhiji Hinduism is just 'a search after truth through non-violent means'. The addition of these last words is really superfluous, as no one outside bedlam ever thought of discovering truth through violence. So defined as a search for Truth, Hinduism ceases to be a religion or a philosophy, and to speak of a Hindu in this sense has no exact significance. The habit of using old terms with new connotations has almost become chronic with him so that his terms sound national or geographical.[61]

The author argued that Gandhi's brand of Hinduism was a necessary part of his political strategy. He wrote of Gandhi, 'He is keen to be known as a Sanatani Hindu, but on his own terms . . . . It is not difficult to see that Gandhiji's Sanatanism is of a very diluted type, or else he could not have become the champion of the oppressed and the depressed.'[62] The stance of these articles was very critical of the thought generated by the Hindu renaissance. Yet these articles, too, were representatives of the thought of BHU.

Articles on a wide range of subjects demonstrate the diversity of BHU, but articles that questioned common beliefs and perceptions of the time were the most telling of the intellectual openness of the University. There

60 A. R. Wadia, 'Mahatma Gandhi and His Philosophy', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 231.
61 Ibid., p. 240.
62 Ibid.

were articles analysing and criticizing standard assumptions, many of which exhibited remarkable perception for their time and circumstance. These types of articles spanned the entire three decades of the University prior to the independence, the period covered by this study. The following excerpts on the subjects of history, nationalism, progress, and modernity, Hindu–Muslims relations and women's issues provide only a slight sampling of the work produced by the students and faculty of BHU.

History

An article on the historical method brought out the subjectivity of history:

> Now-days, we no longer consider history to be a mere literary record set out in haphazard fashion but a body of systematised knowledge of past events obtained by critical methods of investigation . . . . Reviewing briefly the course of historical studies during the earlier times we find that each successive age has *interpreted the record of the past* in the light of its own ideas and according to methods acceptable to itself.[63]

Another article on the philosophy of history addressed the limitations of historical accounts:

> But there can be no such thing as a final verdict in history. Unbiased accounts of historical events are not obtainable since they are recorded and handed down by men who have their own predilections and prejudices. Documents however complete and circumstantial may be imperfectly drawn up. They may be set down in the interests of some cause personal, communal or national. Thus there is a large possibility of bias in the recording and interpretation of events and facts, beside the bias or spirit of the times, by the teacher and the reader himself . . . . Truth to a historian is essentially that which makes sense of all data to hand . . . . The historian's truth or synthesis rests on a balance of probabilities understood at the time of writing history.[64]

The author argues against the classification of Indian history into Mughal, medieval, and ancient periods. He reasoned, 'This classification, racial and religious, vitiates the whole conception of our history.' He also wrote of the role of history in 'imagined' patriotism:

> The place of patriotism in history teaching is great. The chief centre of interest and inspiration in national history is the love of the country and its inhabitants

63 G. P. Mehta, 'The Historical Method', *BHU Magazine,* Vol. 30, 1930, No. 1, p. 83.

64 S. V. Putambekar, 'Philosophy of History', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 3, 1939, No. 1–2, pp. 29–30.

and their culture. On that basis alone can the conception of unity, independence, liberty and fraternity be built. Thus patriotism gives significance to the events of history and by developing the imaginative faculties promotes a sense of duty to one's country and its inhabitants and loyalty to its ideals and culture.[65]

Progress and Modernity

A student's essay gave a brief history of the concept of progress and questioned the modern tendency towards blind devotion to the ideology of progress. The student argued that the assumption that progress is good was impossible to prove, its destination unknowable, and therefore 'The idea of Progress involves a question of fact and is an is as insoluble as the problem of personal immorality.'[66]

Another article by D. D. Kosambi argued that modernism, with its emphasis upon industry, the rights of man and respect for science, was actually not far removed from the feudalistic ills of the Middle Ages in Europe. He compares the subjects of a capitalistic society to serfs:

> The capitalist 'state' is maintained by taxation of its subjects—the consumers. The labourers in so far as they are not consumers of the product are just serfs, slaves, sometimes with a superficial resemblance to the Medieval Guild. Wage, or rather, poverty and hunger, limit their action. The individual practically ceases to exist. His value is determined primarily by his buying power, and his interest in the particular commodity, or, his power to affect a sale of that commodity determines his share of citizenship in a 'state'. One human being can thus belong to several states at once and usually does. The trader that buys from the Company and retails to the consumer is a feudal baron. The tie that holds that state together is not a religious injunction, but money-interest. Control of the sources of raw material and of transportation by the large Companies reduce the small producing trader to the status of a robber-knight.[67]

Kosambi found little hope for change in the common carriers of modern western culture:

> Pure science gives us nothing to hope for; it is at best the present day garb of monastic life, apart from the sorrows of the world, concentrating upon its search for Divine Truth. Literature indeed, is a possible source of danger. Contemporary American authors of any note (Cabell, Mencken, Hergesheimer, Lewis, Sinclair) form a literature of protest against the life that surrounds them. Euro-

65 Ibid., p. 38.
66 Krishna Dev Tiwari, 'Idea of Progress', *CHC Magazine*, Vol. 22, No. 5, 1 May 1922, pp. 141–3.
67 D. D. Kosambi, 'The New Medievalism', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 30, 1930, p. 177.

pean literature shows little of any vigorous writing, except in the contraband Russian poetry. The healthy and incisive literary criticism of Croce will raise the heedful artist away from the world into art for its own sake, and is liable to be neglected in his native land from his criticism of Fascismo. In fact, literature as such has less effect at a critical point than the newspapers, which are in the hands of Capital, or may be won over by invoking patriotism or some other Idol of the Tribe.[68]

Kosambi concluded the article by saying that he did see hope in the rise of the depressed classes in India, the working class and in the decentralization of industry promoted by the Khaddar movement.

Nationalism

There were a number of articles that took a critical view of nationalism, relating it to the divisive forces of communalism. The winner of the Gandhi Prize essay at BHU, S. V. Putambekar, wrote an article, 'Peace and Collective Security',[69] which is described it as a destructive concept:

> We now need an international mind, or rather the international attitude of mind for grasping the problem of peace. The average citizen lives in a cramped world, bounded by his national frontiers. He is from childhood the victim of certain irrational, bigoted and anti-pacifist influences; national history that is little more than an annal of war won and lost and an instrument of misguided patriotism; a racial feeling that is absolutely false; ideas of national glory and prestige that are the bulwark of the vested interests; and above all militarism.[70]

Putambekar, a professor of political science at BHU was one of the most prolific writers in the BHU publications. His article, 'Politics, National and International,' criticized nationalism, pointing out differences between liberalism and nationalism:

> To work for a united India means in practice a state controlled by the British or some powerful state in which liberalism is necessary but does not exist. Shall we then first try to make the nation-state or to get liberal rights? These two movements are still intermingled and confused in India. What we want most urgently is freedom from immediate foreign control. We want a nation-state. The essential antagonism between nationalism and liberalism is not yet made clear in our country but they are no doubt fundamentally opposed. Nationalism

68 Ibid., p. 179.
69 S. V. Putambekar, 'Peace and Collective Security', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 6 (1941), pp. 317–56.
70 Ibid., p. 349.

emphasises the group and makes it intolerant of the individual rights, which are the very basis of liberalism.[71]

Putambekar wrote that federalism would be destructive to the Indian people, 'I think the new Federalism in our politics will inevitably perpetuate our ancient dynastic, provincial and communal localisms. There will be no nation created.' He argued against partisanship and ideologies:

> Let us not be exclusive or absolutist, dogmatic or sensate. Let us not use exaggerated and extreme language of partisanship and excite devotion to one-sided theories, and passion against those of others. There is no such thing as an inevitable and absolute doctrine or future of mankind. It is only wishful thinking at present.[72]

Putambekar's 'Contemporary History and the Science of Geopolitics'[73] criticizes the Karl Haushofer's concepts of geopolitics which supported the Nazi platform of aggression and ethnic cleansing. Haushofer, founder of the Munich Institute in 1924, argued that for German society to progress, Germans had to become expansive; they must learn to think and act in terms of large geographical spaces, not merely in terms of their restricted homeland. Putambekar wrote:

> It generates a geographical materialism and determinism to suit the philosophy of racial destiny and domination and neglects higher end and values of human life. It only creates an extreme longing for and fond hope for larger living spaces and for political expansion without any scheme for the ordering and organising of higher human life as a whole on the basis of justice, freedom and happiness equal to all. In practice it becomes the mission and mysticism of the blood or race, a mission and mysticisms of the soil or geography. Both play the role of myth in history.[74]

While the article was written in the context of Hitler's aggression in Europe, the same arguments could have been applied to any aggressive politics based on race, ethnicity or religion, including Hindu nationalism. Putambekar, through his writing and teaching, apparently offered challenging positions for the students of BHU.

71 S. V. Putambekar, 'Politics, National and International', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 6a (1942), pp. 104–17.
72 Ibid.
73 S. V. Putambekar, 'Contemporary History and the Science of Geopolitics', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 7 (1942), pp.182–200.
74 Ibid., p. 200.

Hindu–Muslim Relations

Hindu–Muslim relationships were also addressed in BHU articles. Though there were no outright antagonistic articles, there was occasional mention of Muslim domination in the past. An article on educational traditions of the Hindus, for instance, in explaining the practice of Hindus during Mughal rule, stated, 'This was the time when India was under the full hold of the Muslims. The performance of religious ceremonies was not a certain and safe thing. So even wider scope was allowed for contingency.'[75] There was a definite negative undertone in such statements, but there were no articles that were blatantly critical of Muslims. To the contrary, authors expressed appreciation of Muslim social beliefs:

> The principles and forms of Muslim social life differ from those of the Hindus. Though their society is based on and imbued with the tenets of their religion like that of the Hindus, and the principles underlying their social organization and social beliefs are absolutely different from those of the Hindus. The ideal Islamic social system is based on the principle of the equality of man.[76]

The author saw problems in the current practice of Islam, just as there were problems in Hinduism, but saw hope for reform among Muslims:

> Today they suffer from caste ideas in spite of their ideas of equality and brotherhood. There are no intermarriages and there are discriminations amongst Saiyads, Shaikhs, Mughals, Pathans and others. Intermarriages are very often avoided and are less common. There is the pride of noble birth and there is the difference of culture as well as colour. But one good thing there is. There is no injunction against intermarriages and therefore this reform can come about easily by education and leveling of cultural ideas and customs.[77]

Another article, the convocation address of the distinguished Kashmiri pandit, Tej Bahadur Sapru, argued that the Hindus and Muslims shared a common culture:

> First and foremost, I submit we should expect our Universities not merely to impart education in modern sciences and different branches of knowledge, but to bring about a synthesis of Indian culture. I use the word 'culture' in its largest sense. I should like our young men to remember that Indian culture is a variegated mosaic and indeed it would be difficult to claim for any culture in the

75 Raj Bali Pandey, 'The Educational Samskaras of the Hindus', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 5, 1940, p. 28.
76 P. S. Putambekar, 'Muslim Social Life in India', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 28, 1928, p. 293.
77 Ibid., p. 295.

world that in the course of its development it had not been influenced by other cultures. I have always maintained that while it is correct to say that there is such a thing as Hindu philosophy and such a thing as a Muslim philosophy, it is absurd to maintain in 1941 that there is such a thing as purely Hindu Culture, and such a thing as a purely Muslim culture.[78]

The journal also published articles that argued that Hindu–Muslim unity was essential for the country and criticized communalism. After the British had blamed the failure of the Second Round Table Conference on the Indians' inability to solve the communal question, a professor of political science at BHU, Gurmukh Nihal Singh, responded with an article titled 'The Rise of Political Communalism'. Singh wrote:

Communalism—religious communalism—is no doubt of very ancient origin. Before the British came to India communal divisions existed among the people and outbreaks of religious fanaticism led to the breaking of heads and destruction of property. But the exploiting of religion for political purposes by persons who are anything but religious is altogether a new phenomenon.[79]

The following excerpts from articles published at BHU all supported the goal of achieving peace and unity with Muslims in India:

In the renovated India of the future, every citizen will be made to feel that he owns this country. Thus, the lands, the hills and valleys, the rivers that beautify this ancient heritage, the very stars and planets that bedeck the blue canopy above will be his. When that is so, the citizen will feel it a point of both honour and pride that he should defend his own shores and frontiers and live at peace with his neighbours. We shall no longer be throwing bombs upon the Mohamadans.[80]

There cannot be any peace in this world unless humanity . . . accepts the ideal of multi-cultural development and allows even the numerically weak to work out their own cultural ideals without any let or hindrance from the numerically or physically strong. We must not only cultivate tolerance, but to learn to appreciate views different from our own, if they are honestly held. This, as I understand it, is the message of our ancient culture and philosophy.[81]

78 Tej Bahadur Sapru, 'Convocation Address of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 6 (1942), p. 71.
79 Gurmukh Nihal Singh, 'The Rise of Political Communalism', *BHU Magazine,* Vol. 33, April–June 1932, No. 2, pp. 84f.
80 B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, 'The Parting of the Ways', *BHU Magazine,* Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 14.
81 Madan Mohan Malaviya, 'Tenth All-India Oriental Conference, Tirupati, Presidential Address', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 5, 1940, p. 11.

The BHU Convocation Address published in the *Journal of BHU* of Sir Mirza M. Ismail, the Muslim dewan of several princely states, was indication of a liberal atmosphere at the University:

> I feel very deeply, and shall always cherish in memory, the warmth of the invitation and welcome extended to me, a Muslim guest. That has been the spirit of this University from the very beginning. It has always sought to be in the broadest sense a national institution . . . . How admirable and significant it is that from the first, this University has been generously supported by Muslims, just as Aligarh is still receiving lavish donations from Hindus! The more deeply one understands and feels the vital truth of one's own religion, the more responsive one is to the religion of others. The closer we are to the great heart of the country, the closer is our allegiance to each others.[82]

The articles in the BHU periodicals concerning Muslims never openly attacked Muslims or Islam. From the tone of the other articles published in the magazine, such attitudes would have been regarded as backward and unseemly at the University. The liberal attitude was much more in keeping with the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the campus.

Women's Issues

There were a number of articles on women's issues in the BHU periodicals that reflected a strong female voice at the University. One article addressed the progress made by women of Banaras and the place of the University in that process:

> It was twenty-five years ago, a generation back that I had first addressed a gathering of ladies in Benares. The Congress was holding its sittings in Kashi. The Social Reform Association was plodding on with its resolutions and putting up one or two women speakers available in those days to plead their cause before men, and a few considerate men of Kashi had arranged for a meeting of women by themselves in the heart of the city. Quarter of a century back, the women of Banaras had to be coaxed to throng and listen to words of reason advocating the education of women and the throwing off of *purdah*. Today Benaras has its own women's College, women from all parts of India are congregating on the spot to have co-education with men, and I have the honour of addressing the women graduates of Benares in this meeting where men are present by courtesy only.
>
> What have the women of India achieved during this passage of time!
>
> Whereas the number of University women could be counted on the fingers' end twenty-five years ago—now they are innumerable—perhaps every other enlightened home is the proud possessor of one. *Purdah* is too antiquated a topic

82 Mirza M. Ismail, 'Convocation Address of Sir Mirza M. Ismail', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 9 (1944–5), p. 10.

for social reform. Women look down sternly on men's open aid as interference and are running organisations of their own for women's welfare. The Congress picketing movement has made the timidity and backwardness of women things of the past.[83]

Another article spoke of the importance of education in freeing women from past obstacles:

> One may confidently hope then that the Indian women of tomorrow, who would have shaken off all shackles and availed themselves of wider opportunities of a more appropriate education, will be able to forge a still stronger bond between themselves.[84]

There was even a suggestion of an Indian women's movement which transcended all religious and caste boundaries in another article:

> The readiness which the educated women of our country have shown to join hands across the social barrier should be an inspiration to their brothers of warring communities. The mutual sympathy with which women of all castes and creeds have been discussing each other's social problems, the alacrity with which Indian women's associations have rejected the Communal Award which is still threatening to split the country—these are a happy augury of a future of unity.[85]

The articles concerning women's issues did not bespeak of women repressed, but of women exploring a new-found confidence. They did not promote a return to purdah. As one article explained, purdah was not even considered a topic worthy of discussion.

The articles at BHU showed a great diversity of thought and intellectual positions. Neither the analytic mode of thinking, nor the rather sentimental gestures of Hindu apologetics dominated the material. The work ranged from mediocre to brilliant, and as the above descriptions of some of the articles of faculty members and students exhibit, the thought in the BHU periodicals was anything but staid. The magazines did not promote a single political or religious stance. While certain social aspects of Muslim culture were criticized, aspects of Hindu and European culture were also subject to scrutiny. The publications of the University were clearly not the champions of Hindu chauvinism. Neither did they support male chauvinism. The University, in spite of taking a conserva-

83 Sabaladevi Chaudhury, 'Vedanta in Action', *BHU Magazine*, No. 3, July–September 1931, No. 3, p. 212.
84 Shree Devi Kurup, 'The International Ideal and Women', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1935, pp. 283.
85 Ibid., p. 282f.

tive approach with regard to women, made significant contributions to the education and liberation of women.

THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE

It is not hard to imagine that in an era where academic competitions for college youth included sports and academic contests for men and sewing events for women, that there would be some discrepancies in the standards of education between men and women. At the beginning of the century, university education for women was still a novel concept, whether in India, or in Europe and America. Annie Besant, considered an unacceptable radical in her own culture for her participation in the movement for women's suffrage as well as her other controversial and public stances, was largely responsible for the acceptance of the education of young women in the region of Banaras. After joining the Theosophical Society and coming to India, Besant had gained national fame as a defender of Hinduism. Her efforts to establish a curriculum and college atmosphere based on conservative Hindu traditions were applauded by many in the area, who also showed a remarkable fondness for her. When Besant founded the residential Besant School for Women in Kamaccha, conservative families ventured to send their daughters to her to be educated. They were not disappointed. The girls were well educated by the standards of the day, many gaining admission later to the university exams. The school later became affiliated with BHU. The precedent for women's education was set by Besant School for Women, which prepared many women for entrance into the Women's College of BHU.

From the beginning, University regulations of BHU called for the admission of women students. No age limits were imposed. There was provision both for women in purdah to take examinations and for women to be admitted to examinations as private students, that is, if they studied at home with tutors and did not attend University classes. As the *BHU Calendar 1922–25* stipulated, provision would be made for the residence of women on campus when it became necessary.[86] But Pandit Malaviya did not regard the construction of a women's hostel as an urgent necessity. Therefore, the numbers of women attending BHU was small. It was not until Seth Khatau Makanji, a well-known mill-owner and philanthropist in Delhi donated Rs 291,000 toward the starting of the Women's College and for construction of the Women's Hostel, that women's edu-

86 *BHU Calendar 1922–25*, pp. 279.

cation gained the attention of the University. Makanji, a supporter of women's education, also provided a hostel for Professor Karve's 'University for Women' in Poona.[87]

From the time of the establishment of the University, safety and chastity of women students was a major concern. According to a former student, it was after an 'incident' involving one of the female students and a male student, a high wall was built around the Women's College and a guarded gate installed.[88] Young men were not allowed inside the walls. Male and female students of BHU were subjected to different standards of conduct. For example, while one regulation for the Women's Hostel required students to keep their rooms neat and tidy,[89] there was no corresponding regulation regarding the men's hostels. The women were more carefully supervised than the men. While male students could attend movies in the city, the women were not allowed to do so. Women students could not leave the confines of the Women's College without permission of the warden unless they were in a group, and then they were only allowed to visit a temple or go shopping.[90] If a young man wanted to send a message to one of the female students of the College, only the warden or superintendent of the College could deliver the message. Students were required to be in the hostel and present for roll call by 7:00 p.m. in the winter and 8:00 p.m. in the summer.[91] Due to strict supervision of young women at BHU, many parents who would have refused to send their daughters to less conservative colleges allowed them to attend Pandit Malaviya's Women's College. The College had the reputation among more sophisticated young women for being 'old fashioned'. It was well known that many parents sent their daughters to both Annie Besant's School for Women and to BHU because they wanted to obtain better grooms for them. Conservatives regarded both institutions favourably. At BHU, the female students were not allowed to mingle freely with male students. When male professors came to lecture at the Women's College, the students had to cover their heads.[92] Due to the effort to keep women secluded, they were not offered all the courses of study open to men.

87 *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 29, 1930, No. 2, p. 151.
88 Leela Sharma, interview, Banaras, July 1995.
89 *BHU Calendar 1922–25*, p. 374.
90 Shanti Sadiq Ali, interview, New Delhi, 18 September 1997, New Delhi, said that sometimes the women broke the rules. After being permission to go shopping, they went instead to the 'talkies.' But this was rare.
91 *BHU Calendar 1922–25*, pp. 375f.
92 Leela Sharma, interview, Banaras, December 1996.

During most of the pre-independence period of the University, only subjects which were perceived as being appropriate to the female students were offered at the Women's College. English, history, and home science were permissible. But such areas of study as engineering and agriculture, which demanded public or frequent outdoor work, were deemed unfit for women. It was not until 1946, that the University announced plans for the expansion and development of the Women's College. The University Court decided to start science classes so that women could prepare themselves for medical courses. Plans were also considered to build a new women's hostel at the Teachers' Training College and to increase the number of women students there.[93] The University gradually decided to allow women to attend courses which were not offered in the Women's College. Ram Avadh Singh, who joined BHU as a student in 1947 and later became the head of the Faculty of Commerce, was proud of the number of women and their accomplishments in his department. Girls were allowed in the undergraduate Commerce programme as the Women's College did not provide for instruction in Commerce, only in Arts, Science, and Social Sciences. Professor Singh said that the presence of women serves to improve discipline because the women are good students. He said, 'Girls do very well. Most get 1st division. Many times they are toppers.'[94]

There were women students who dared to break the all-male restrictions in the College of Theology. In 1945, when a female student wanted to study the Vedas in the exclusively male College of Theology, she was firmly denied the opportunity.[95] The University tried to appear fair by initiating courses in the Vedas in the College of Oriental Learning that admitted both genders. In 1950 Prem Lata Sharma, a bright young woman who had just passed her MA exam, wanted to study for the acharya exam in the College of Theology. She said that her grandfather had been very liberal in wanting the girls of the family to be educated. But the College of Theology would not admit her. Prem Lata's father wrote to the Vice Chancellor, Govind Malaviya, and to all the members of the Executive Council saying that it was unconstitutional to exclude women. Govind Malaviya reprimanded Prem Lata and told her to do a PhD, not

93 Minutes of Adjourned Meeting of the Court, No. 3, 16 Dec. 1946, in Court, *BHU Minutes, Annual Meeting of the Court held on 14th and 16th December, 1946 and of the Special Meeting of the Court held on Sunday, 12 January 1947*, p. 8.

94 Ram Avadh Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.

95 *BHU Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Court*, No. 1 held on 1 December 1945, p. 7.

the acharya. Prem Lata said she was afraid of the Vice Chancellor and asked her father not to pursue the matter. But in an interesting twist, the teachers of the Theological Faculty did not object to her studying under them. They told her that she could attend classes and take exams as long as she was not on the roll. Prem Lata Sharma was the first female student to pass the acharya exam.[96] She also received a PhD in Sanskrit from the University and remained to teach in the College of Music of BHU until her retirement. Even in the most conservative area of the University, the Women's College, openness to change became apparent.

MODERNITY EMBRACED

The establishment of BHU was heralded as a triumph for the 'Renaissance of Hinduism'. But a true renaissance of traditional learning did not occur at the University. Neither was there a real merger of empirical and traditional means of transmitting knowledge. Nevertheless, the University developed an environment where Hindu identity was upheld with pride, at the same time modernity was embraced. The University as a whole, exhibited little aversion to new and controversial ideas and created a stimulating intellectual environment. Even a critic of the organizational weaknesses of the University, the unnamed writer for the *Leader,* had to confess that the BHU campus was a strong centre of intellectual activity. He wrote, 'The intellectual atmosphere of Nagwa is better than in most places in this country.'[97] The articles published by the University faculty and students illustrate a wide range of thought and opinion at the University.

It was not a particular set of beliefs that created the Hindu atmosphere of the University. Ancient Sanskrit scriptures, rituals, or common doctrines were not vital to the construction of the Hindu atmosphere. A specifically Hindu ideology did not dominate the intellectual life of the campus. Though efforts were made to bring ancient knowledge into consistency with modern, western ideas, such efforts met with only moderate success. But the broad embrace of the ideas of the Hindu renaissance made room for all **that** was modern, even to the seeming neglect of traditional knowledge. At BHU, the most analytical and secular-minded professors were considered no less Hindu than the most erudite of Sanskrit pandits. By placing Hindu professors in front of the

96 Prem Lata Sharma, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
97 'The Hindu University', *Leader* (Allahabad), 31 May 1924.

lecterns of a modern university and by training young men and women in all the fields necessary for service in a modern nation, BHU contributed significantly to the development of nationalism during the independence movement. The nationalism of the University, however, was not one based upon a narrowly defined sense of Hindu identity. The outlook of BHU, in general, was cosmopolitan.

BHU was designed as a religious university. Pandit Malaviya and the founders of the University envisioned the institution as a 'temple of learning,' a Hindu temple of learning. In many ways, though, BHU veered away from traditional Hindu learning. Religion was dissociated from the performance of rituals and interpreted in a wider sense as culture. A wide definition of Hinduness allowed a diffuse and inclusive Hindu identity to flourish on the campus, uniting students from diverse castes and regions of South Asia. This notion of a unified Hindu identity corresponded to the self-consciousness of the Hindu community nurtured by British inspired definitions of Hinduism and communal political representation. At BHU, Hindu identity was not inherently communal in nature, it was neutral. The broad and inclusive definition of Hinduism that developed at BHU can be considered very liberal and accepting, as was evidenced in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the campus. The association of religion with culture that developed at BHU held the potential, though, for interpretation of many aspects of society, including political issues, as religious causes.[98] While what was considered Hindu at BHU still included Sanskrit learning, Hindu temple architecture, and traditional Indian clothes, the broad definition was spacious enough to also wrap modernity within the saffron swathe of Hinduism.

98 Mark Juergensmeyer wrote of the politicization of religion in northern Ireland. He observed that those who viewed religion as within the domain of the established church did not view the activities of the Irish Republicans as religious. Those that thought of religion in the broadest sense as society saw the violent political activities

CHAPTER SEVEN

Tradition Unseated: BHU Students and the Quest for Identity

With the advent of western education in India, Indian students increasingly experienced a break in connection with their own vital and nourishing heritage. It was not as if they were unaffected by the cultural elements of familial and caste obligation which had formerly served to integrate individuals into their local cultures, but the older ways were now felt to be largely irrelevant, inadequate to the demands of the colonial Indian society. The students lacked a sense of connection to the modern world they aspired to enter, a world defined not only by western standards and ideas, but also by the ugly realities of colonial domination. The youth found themselves unable to identify completely with either traditional culture or with modern, at least in a way which preserved their self-respect. They felt ambivalence towards both. Banaras Hindu University had been founded in the hopes of offsetting the negative aspects of western education and the alienation of students to their own culture by providing an educational atmosphere that was grounded in Hindu culture and yet encouraged the ferment of ideas. Pandit Malaviya realized that if there were to be a true renaissance of Hinduism, growth and change were essential. Pandit Malaviya's ideas and University policies regarding campus life supported a stimulating interaction among students from different backgrounds, faculty, and visiting lecturers. Hostel arrangements, various students organizations, and campus activities all combined to provide a stimulating and cosmopolitan learning atmosphere for the student population. The Hindu identity that was nurtured at BHU went far beyond the traditional boundaries of caste and kin. The students embraced a much larger realm of existence, a civic sphere, which had space for the great diversity that was India.

BHU, as the first residential university in India, had an opportunity to influence the lives of its students. Though there were colleges, including the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College and the former Central

Hindu College, that were residential, the other existing universities had little effect upon the daily lives of the students. At BHU, the majority of the students lived on campus in hostels provided by the University. Except holiday visits to home, students rarely left the University grounds. Only occasionally the students would go in groups to the Ganga, to a temple or to a cinema in Banaras. The campus was at some distance from the city, and due to the cost of transportation, the students rarely had the means to travel to the city. As one male student remembered, 'We went to the cinema once in a month. Going to the cinema involved going and coming, conveyance money, ticket money.'[1] So for many students, the BHU campus was their only world for several years. The campus was virtually a city unto itself.

By 1937, there were 1782 students residing in eight hostels on campus and 410 students rooming in approved lodges in Banaras. The hostels included the Makanji Khatau Hostel for Women with 96 students; the Raja Baldeo Das Birla Hostel with 352 students; the Ram Narayan Ruiya Hostel, with 382 students; the Sangidas Shahpur Broacha Hostel with 358 students; the Raja Dhanrajgiri Hostel with 100 students; the Birla Mohta Rajputana Hostel with 220 students; and the Thakor Jeswant Singhji Rajput Limbdi Hostel with 214 students.[2] Due to shortage of hostel rooms, some students were allowed to live in boarding houses in Banaras, which had been approved by the University and were subject to certain rules. With the permission of the Pro-Vice Chancellor, some students from the Banaras area were allowed to live with their parents. The students in the Faculties of Oriental Learning and Theology could live in the hostels or in *chhattra*s or ashrams, which were placed under complete control of the University.[3] The Women's Hostel was on campus, but set apart within the walled and closely monitored confines of the Women's College.

The hostels were a combination of grandeur and simplicity. The University went to great lengths to provide dignified and beautiful living quarters for the students. The hostels were large grand buildings constructed with Hindu architectural features and adornments. But the stu-

1 K. P. Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.
2 Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Court, No. 1, 27 Nov. 1937, *BHU Minutes, Vol. 22b, July to December 1937*: Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Court, No. 1, 27 Nov 1937, Appendix 4, University Hostels, p. 551.
3 From 'Residence of Students', and 'BHU Regulations', *BHU Calendar 1930–31*, p. 138.

dent rooms themselves were relatively small. They had windows and high ceilings for light and ventilation, and all the rooms opened onto verandahs. Most of the students shared their rooms with one room-mate.[4] At times there were single rooms available for senior students. First year students, however, had to share their rooms with three other students. The rooms were simply furnished with wooden beds. The students brought their own bedding, which consisted of a thin cotton mattress and bed covers. During the first decades of the University, there were no bathing or toilet facilities within the hostels themselves. Wells were dug in front of the hostels, and in the morning, students had their baths there. The students were expressly forbidden by University regulations from keeping pots of water on the verandahs of the hostels and taking their baths there.[5] As indoor toilets were not a common feature of Indian households at the time, the University did not consider installing them. Students found the fields and open areas of the campus to be convenient. It was not until 1946, when the University had grown to over four thousand students that it decided that drainage and sanitation needed to be arranged before there was any further development.[6] When the first hostels were constructed, they were built over flat, treeless land, which had formerly been cultivated. It was not until much later, in 1937 that the University could report that the hostel grounds 'had been considerably improved with the laying out of gardens and lawns.'[7] The flower gardens and mango groves that were planted gave the hostel grounds a forest atmosphere where peacocks roamed, creating a very beautiful environment for the students.

The University created a living environment that did not segregate students according to status. The religion, caste, and wealth of the families of the students were not a factor in determining where a student resided. It was not uncommon at Indian colleges for student hostels to be determined on the basis of economic status or caste. At Agra College, for instance, there were caste hostels. At Annie Besant's Central Hindu College, hostels were distinguished according to wealth of the students. There were three hostels, which also related to first, second, and third

4 Ram Avadh Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.

5 *BHU Calendar 1922–25*, pp. 372f.

6 Minutes of Adjourned Meeting of the Court, No. 3, 16 Dec. 1946 in Court, *BHU Minutes, Annual Meeting of the Court held on 14 and 16 December, 1946 and of the Special Meeting of the Court held on Sunday, 12 January 1947*, p. 7.

7 Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Court, No. 1, 27 Nov. 1937, *BHU Minutes, Vol. 22b, July to December 1937*, Appendix 10, University Hostels, p. 551.

class accommodation. When the Central Hindu College was transferred to BHU, the three hostels were combined into one, the King Edward Hostel. The Kamaccha hostels, however, returned to their segregated status later when they became the hostels of the Central Hindu Boys School, which was affiliated to BHU. A report on the Central Hindu School hostels in 1937 stated that there were three boarding houses. In the first-class hostel resided scholars from affluent families; in the second-class the majority came from rural areas and could afford a modest sum for their education. Harijans lived in the third-class hostels free of rent and had to make their own cooking arrangements.[8]

At Aligarh Muslim College there were also originally three classes of accommodation based upon the family wealth of the student. As early as 1881, the basic costs for room and board at the Muslim College, according to David Lelyveld, 'ranged from twenty-four rupees a month for first class to eight and a half for the third class, with various gradations in between.'[9] The Hindu students of Aligarh College were not permitted to live in the hostels. They lived in six small, detached bungalows.[10] In 1885, the third class Muslim hostel was abolished and all the Muslim students ate together at a relatively high price.[11] Over the years, the costs of room and board increased.

The hostel fees of BHU were significantly lower, making it possible for the students from less affluent families to attend the University. Room and board at BHU in 1922 was a standard three rupees per month for a single room and two rupees for a shared room. Rooms with electric lights had an added charge of rupees 1.8 per month.[12] At BHU, there was no distinction in standards of hostels according to the economic status of the student, nor separate hostels provided for students of different castes or religion. Students of differing backgrounds lived together under the same roof. They also dined together, sharing dining rooms or messes. The University provided messes free to students in groups of ten. As only vegetarian food was allowed in the hostels,[13] most students ate the same food. They ignored caste differences and ate in messes of twenty or thirty students. As a student recalled, 'There were around twenty messes,

8 Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Court, No. 1, 27 Nov. 1937, *BHU Minutes, Vol. 22b, July to December 1937*, Appendix 10, Central Hindu School, p. 649.
9 David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, pp. 173f.
10 Kakorwi, ed., *Morrison's History of the MAO College*, p. 23.
11 Ibid., p. 174.
12 *BHU Calendar 1922–25*, pp. 357–9.
13 Ibid., p. 370.

each preparing food for twenty to thirty students. There were two canteens for tea and snacks. Caste did not determine one's mess. Mixed castes ate together and had the same kind of food.'[14] For students to dine with other castes was a radical departure from their family and community customs. Breaking bread together meant discarding ancient caste boundaries. But the University did force mixed dining upon students. Students could organize themselves into their own groups. If students wanted private messes, or messes used by a group smaller than ten students, they had to pay for it, unless they could show that their religious tradition required it of them. Arrangements were made for a few non-vegetarians by having a separate mess set up in one corner of the campus. The situation of living and dining together with students from other backgrounds enlarged the field of experience of the students. The first hostel of BHU, before the move to the Nagwa campus, was the King Edward Hostel. The composition of the King Edward Hostel was thus described in an article in the *Central Hindu College Magazine*:

> The Hostel is a curious mixture of humour and seriousness, of different temperaments and culture, as we actually find in the present year, like the old city-state of the Roman Empire: the Bengalee, the Mahratta, the Punjabee, the Madrasee, the Beharee and the Hindustani, all gathered here in a common life, but presenting at the same time different languages with the typical dialect and accent, and in the singular habit.[15]

The diversity of the University increased as the student population increased. Hostel life presented a situation where young men and women of differing backgrounds and from different parts of India lived together most of the year, sharing many common activities, under the watchful eyes of the guardians of the hostels, the wardens.

The wardens and senior students helped to maintain a standard of decorum in the hostels. In the years before independence, student behaviour was rarely marked by indiscipline. In the classroom, students were very respectful of their teachers, in many cases standing in awe of them. Students arrived for classes punctually, rose to their feet when their professor entered the room, and addressed him formally. There were penalties for students who were unruly. Misconduct, according to its seriousness, was punished by the imposition of a fine not exceeding one rupee or cancellation of the day's attendance in the subject, or suspension from the class for a period not exceeding three days. In each

14 Ram Avadh Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.
15 *Central Hindu College Magazine*, Vol. 21, 1 June 1921, No. 6, p. 257.

case the punishment had to be reported to the principal of the college.[16] Corporal punishment was not inflicted upon the students. In the hostels, teachers served as wardens, providing close supervision for the students of BHU. The first hostels of the University were under the supervision of four wardens and assistant wardens, but as the number of students and hostels increased, chief wardens were also appointed. In 1937 there were seven chief wardens, twenty-six wardens, and numerous assistant wardens caring for 1782 students.[17] The wardens and their assistants lived in the hostels and kept a close eye on the students. While there were bound to be occasional problems, dignified behaviour and respect for other students was the order of the day. Students were expected to live chaste and upright brahmachari lifestyles, and avoid bad habits such as drinking and smoking. Derogatory remarks and 'loose talk' were considered inappropriate in the hostels. The wardens and the older students made sure that a cordial atmosphere was maintained among the students. As one student recalled, 'We had to respect the senior students and teachers. There was decorum in the hostels, no noise-creating. We could have informal meetings with our caste fellows and loose talk, but only in our rooms.'[18]

The wardens were responsible for seeing that all the students were in bed at night and were not out committing mischief. According to the University regulations, a roll call was to be conducted by the assistant warden around 8 p.m. every evening and students were to be in bed by 10 p.m., when the bell outside the hostel was rung.[19] The warden had the authority to discipline residents for breaking the rules. According to the University regulations, punishment for irregularity in attendance, persistent idleness, misconduct or other breach of discipline could be, according to the nature of the case, a warning, fine, suspension from membership of the college for a period not exceeding one month, or a recommendation to the University for detention from being sent up for the examination, or expulsion from the college for the academic year or rustication.[20] The wardens could be strict or lenient, according to their temper, but former students never described hostel life as oppressive.

16 Chapter 20, 'Rules of Discipline, BHU Regulations', *BHU Calendar 1930–1*, p. 248.
17 Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Court, No. 1, 27 Nov. 1937, *BHU Minutes, Vol. 22b, July to December 1937*, Appendix 4, University Hostels, p. 551.
18 Ram Avadh Singh, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
19 *BHU Calendar*, p. 370.
20 Ibid., p. 365.

A sense of fun was not entirely lacking in the BHU hostels. The students of BHU managed to have their moments of frivolity. They made fun of the supposed sanctity of their 'temple of learning', for instance, in their descriptions of the hostels, which made a humorous mockery of the sacred space. A student explained, 'The First Hostel (now the Birla Hostel) is so constructed that the Wardens have their celestial abodes on the *Swarga* (heaven) floor whereas the wards are obliged to remain on the *Martya* (mortal) and the *Patala* (low region) floors.'[21] According to the student, the Fourth Hostel, home to the first-year students of the Central Hindu College and the students of the College of Oriental Learning, enjoyed a less exalted reputation:

> In my first year, I was so to say, *stabled* in one of the four-seated rooms of the *Ghursal* (the horse-stable) as the Fourth Hostel (now the Ruiya Hostel) was then nicknamed, equally divided between the pseudo-anglicized 'first-year-fools' of the Central Hindu College and the long-tufted simpletons of the College of Oriental Learning, who would often vainly empty a full matchbox in trying to light an electric lamp newly provided in their rooms.[22]

The nicknames for hostels and classes of students were ways in which the students claimed the University as their own. They also engaged in silliness, as is illustrated by their participation in competitive gluttony. The student, a member of the esteemed Bull Association describes one hostel block known for its annual dining contest:

> Mehtaji's block was also notorious for its *Bhojana-bhattas* (gluttons) who used to organise Annual Dining Contest which one could enter only when he was capable of taking the start with two large cupfuls of *kheer* (*payasam*) and 21 *puris* of usual size and weight. Luckily there was no dearth of such practised sportsmen in the art of gluttony. I do not feel any hesitation or modesty in claiming that I also got the first prize once, having defeated the runner up, a Nepali friend, by five *puris*, recording the maximum of 72 *puris* and five cupfuls of *kheer* to my credit.[23]

The existence of such youthful pranks attests to the good humor encountered in the hostels. Camaraderie developed among the students as a result of sharing good times and campus traditions.

21 A member of the erstwhile Bull Association, Banaras Hindu University, 'Pandit Ganga Prasad Mehta: Reminiscences', *BHU Old Boys Association—Calcutta 1963–64* (Varanasi: Banaras Hindu University, 1964), p. 30.
22 Ibid., p. 29
23 Ibid., p. 30

The students created their own traditions, some of which fell outside of the bounds of customary practices of their respective communities. Elder students were given due reverence regardless of caste, religion, or family status. Hierarchies developed among the students, which ignored the alleged rigid hierarchies of caste and were based on personality alone. The Stalwart Bull Association, a group of young men from different classes who apparently held sway over the other students, was illustrative of the power of personal charisma:

> The Bulls were the stalwarts of the University, young men of impressive and commanding personalities, giants of manly strength, persons of extraordinary character, self-respect and prowess, who moved forward steadily, at a snail's speed from one class to another with convenient halts in every class for as many years as suited their will. Even though they were innocent, kind and magnanimous, supporting a number of needy students with books, clothes and money, yet every one had an awful reverence for them. Their word was law; their will a command and no one had the courage or audacity to defy them.[24]

The Bulls were admired for their bravado, which on one occasion consisted of claiming the room of a lesser student in the Birla Hostel and transforming it into their own exercise room. They had the stone slabs of the floor removed and brought in soil to provide a soft cushioning for their strenuous exercise routines. When the absent boarder returned to his room, he found it well-equipped with dumb-bells, weight clubs, chest expanders, lifting weights, a large mirror, and other accessories. He did not have the courage to utter a word against the arrangement. The situation was reported to a warden, and it was only due to great fondness that the Bulls had for the particular warden, Mehtaji, that they agreed to vacate the room. The charismatic young Bulls of the University were given deference according to their individual characteristics; they were not distinguished according to any rigid authority of caste. The student society of the University frequently challenged the standard western stereotypes of a caste-based society.

There were many extracurricular activities at BHU, which allowed the students to work and play together. As an important exercise in self-government, the various affairs of the hostels of BHU were conducted by student unions. In July 1921, boarders of King Edward Hostel founded the first boarders union. Officers were elected for the union, rules made, and departments established. Among the departments were Common

24 Ibid.

Room, Literary, Games, Service, and Home.[25] The task of the Literary department was to arrange lectures and debates for the benefit of the boarders. Lectures were given by professors or distinguished visitors to BHU. The lectures addressed a wide range of topics. The first lecture presented by the Literary department was 'The Economics of Non-Co-operation' by Professor Gyan Chandra of the Economics department. The lecture touched on all important problems of economics, such as free-trade and protective tariffs, currency, the factory system, and large scale production versus cottage industry, foreign capital in India and exploitation of industry. He interpreted these aspects of the economy in the light of the non-cooperation. Every hostel had one or more Common Rooms, which were managed by the Common Room department. These were centrally located rooms where students could sit and read periodicals and hold quiet discussions. These Common Rooms provided current reading material for the students to read in their leisure. It was not uncommon for over a dozen current English and vernacular newspapers and periodicals to be provided for the students including the *Leader*, the *Mahratta*, the *Young Indian*, the *Saraswati*, the *Zamana*, the *Pratap*, the *Modern Review*, the *Central Hindu College Magazine*, and others, when funds permitted. A servant was hired to keep the reading room in order. His job was to keep the room tidy, papers folded, as well as to keep an eye on the radio. There was usually a radio in the Common Room, which the students were allowed to listen for special broadcasts. 'It was not allowed to always be on,' one of the former students said, 'otherwise the students would waste their time.'[26] The Home department published the monthly magazine of the hostel, the *Ashrama*, which had contributors from the hostel writing both in English and the vernaculars. The students of the hostel also published a periodical called *Udaya*. The Home department was also responsible for seeing that proper sanitation was carried out in the hostel and that letters were delivered promptly to the boarders. The Games department made arrangements for football, hockey and tennis, as well as for indoor games such as table tennis, carom, and chess. The Service department rendered assistance to sick hostellers, had control over the vendors coming to the hostel, and supervised lighting arrangements. Arrangements for social service outside of the hostel were conducted in coordination with the Seva Committee, a service organization.[27] All the hostels had their own unions and officers. The hos-

25 *CHC Magazine*, Vol. 21, 1 June 1921, No. 6, p. 257.
26 Ram Avadh Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.
27 *CHC Magazine*, Vol. 21, 1 June 1921, No. 6, p. 257.

tel unions provided an engaging environment and produced camaraderie among students of diverse backgrounds as they participated together in the social activities arranged by the hostel departments. There were also many activities sponsored by the University, or by student organizations, which were open to all the students of the campus.

The University attempted to make religious gatherings and Hindu festivals a central feature of campus life. The University observed twenty-five different Hindu holidays by closing the University for a stipulated number of days. For examples, there were two days for Holi, two days for Shiva Ratri, one day for Guru Purnima, and twenty-nine days for Dushhera (from Shila Panchami to Shukla Tritiya). Days of solar and lunar eclipses were also designated as holidays.[28] Largely due to the personal efforts of Pandit Malaviya, a number of religious *kathas* were held on campus, especially during popular celebrations of Krishnajanmashtami and Basant Panchami. The Hindu holidays were occasions of much festivity at BHU. The following is a description of the Basant Panchami celebration in 1923:

> Several hundred students of the Nagwa hostels met on 22 January in the Oriental College Hall to celebrate Basant Panchami . . . . The Hall was decorated and a lively and instructive *katha* was given by Pandit Vinayak Rao of Brahmaghat accompanied by fine music which was highly relished by all. Professor Chinnaswami spoke in Sanskrit and several students said classical Sanskrit *slokas* descriptive of spring. It was a real feast for the eyes to see groups of young men dressed in yellow and pink, the whole scene being worthy of the inauguration of *Basant.* The VC conducted the Saraswati Puja and in a brief speech praised the song of spring sung by the students from Kalidas' *Raghuvamsa* and regretted the ignorance of Sanskrit on the part of many who could not realize the beauty of the charming lines.[29]

While holidays were celebrated with enthusiasm, regular kathas and the Sunday Gita lectures organized by the University failed to draw students. Hostels also sponsored meetings in which religious stories were told by theology professors of the University, guest lecturers, or by Pandit Malaviya. From student accounts, the kathas were not particularly popular with the students. According to an article on hostel activities, the religious occasions were not well attended, but there was little that the Religions and Prayer secretary could do. The reporter explained, 'The fact is that people took very little interest in this direction, although members of our

28 *BHU Calendar 1922–25*, p. 293.
29 *CHC Magazine*, Vol. 23, 1 March 1923, No. 3, p. 94.

university should possess this distinctive feature in prominence. But our blocks no doubt contributed generously to the Malabar Relief Fund.'[30] Pandit Malaviya felt that religious instruction and personal prayer would be edifying to the students. Many students, though, rejecting such traditional forms of religion, instead chose to emulate Pandit Malaviya's own practice of service to the community.

The students organized themselves into various service organizations. The Seva Samiti, an organization dedicated to social service, was formed on the campus in 1921.[31] The students donated their own money and raised funds to help flood victims and victims of violence. They went out into the villages to educate the public in health care, sanitation, khadi, and other subjects. The group helped establish local libraries. They were civic-minded. The social work done by the students apparently drew much notice. In 1924, Aftab Ahmed Khan, the Vice Chancellor of AMU, in the presidential address of the All-India Mohammadan Education Conference titled 'The First Condition of Success,' told the Muslims of the social work of the Hindu students, whom he regarded as missionaries. He called upon the Muslims to educate their students to be as sacrificial as the Hindu students. Though he was speaking in terms of competition between Hindus and Muslims, it was clearly a friendly competition, as he expressed great respect for the Hindu students:

> But the Hindu missionary is, as a rule, a man of education— a number of graduates and masters of arts have dedicated their lives to this work. They are not only cultured and well informed but are armed with the virtues and habits of humility and self-sacrifice— the most effective and indispensable weapons for the propaganda or defence of any religion. Hundreds of highly educated Hindus are devoting their intellect and energy to the service of the poor and the ignorant— they go to villages, walk for miles, sleep on the ground, partake of the simplest possible food, ask for or accept no contributions or entertainment from those they serve, and thus win their hearts and respect. How many highly educated Muslims are there who meet their opponents on this ground? We are against forces that are equipped with much better spiritual, intellectual, moral and physical weapons than we possess. It is therefore necessary that our younger generation should be trained in our educational life and institutions, for a life of service, selflessness and physical endurance.[32]

30 No author given, 'University News—First Hostel Notes 1921–2', *Central Hindu College Magazine*, Vol. 22, 1 May 1922, No. 5, p. 200.
31 P. Seshadri, 'Editor's Notes', *CHC Magazine*, Vol. 22, 1 Sept. 1922, No. 9, p. 252.
32 Aftab Ahmed Khan, 'Presidential Address, All-India Mohammadan Education

In 1930, the *BHU Magazine* reported on the activities of another student service organization, the Sevak Mandal.[33] During summer vacation, the students had given seventy-six lectures, sometimes accompanied by lantern slide shows, mostly during the summer vacation. Of the lectures, forty-eight were given in villages and twenty-eight in towns. They lectured in primary and secondary schools, on football fields, under the auspices of Hindu Sabhas, and even in panchayats, temple and marriage gatherings. The lectures were given in Bihar, the United Provinces, Bombay Presidency, and Hyderabad. There were thirty-two lectures on social reform, fourteen on khaddar, thirteen on religion, eleven on sanitation and hygiene, and sixteen lectures on miscellaneous subjects.[34]

The journal stated that these energetic young men appeared to have tried quite a large number of avenues in serving the interests of the villagers of their respective districts. One of them organized a small library and a reading-room on a co-operative basis in the primary school of his village, while another organized a strike of the *mehtar*s of a village against a water drawing restriction. Social work in the villages gave students a sense of their ability to contribute to the greater good. Student involvement in the villages made them aware of the needs of the larger society. There were other activities at BHU that also expanded the vision of the students, including the opportunity to hear lectures from prominent Indian figures.

The University also sponsored lectures by distinguished guests. This was one of the events which regularly drew the students together in one body. The University brought in numerous speakers. Famous guests who drew large crowds spoke in the outdoor amphitheatre. Smaller gatherings and informal speeches were held at the 'Gandhi Chabutura', a round platform outside the Ruiya Hostel, as well as in the Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya Hall and the Arts College Hall.[35] Among the speakers who visited the campus were the Prince of Wales, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, C. Rajgopalachari, and Ram Manohar Lohia, a socialist. As one former student remembered, who lamented the changed atmosphere of BHU:

Conference—First Condition of Success', *Muslim University Gazette*, Wed. 9 April 1924.

33 'Sevak Mandal', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 30, Jan. 1930, No.1, p. 22.

34 Ibid.

35 Ram Avadh Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.

There was a big emphasis on contact of students with great people. Pandit Malaviya told Nehru to visit BHU because character was formed by meeting people of high moral character, not by books. Until 1965 this aspect was emphasized at BHU. Those students made a mark, but things changed, politics were introduced, people no longer care, people are afraid, even the VC is afraid of his own students. How can you build character? I don't blame the VC or students. Things have changed. There are so many protests, so many black flags—all on political grounds. This is a great change.[36]

The regular visits of nationalist leaders to BHU were an important means of keeping students in touch with wider events happening in the country. The BHU students regarded the nationalist leaders as their heroes and role models. As one former student, Ram Avadh Singh, recalled, 'Political leaders of great stature visited the University. Freedom fighters who had undergone great sacrifices were worshipped like gods. Many would come at least once a year to BHU. This generated a lot of enthusiasm.'[37] While the nationalist leaders were the most popular guests, the University brought in guests of all persuasions. The convocation addresses of BHU were given by a host of distinguished speakers including Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru,[38] Sir Mirza M. Ismail,[39] Sir M. Visvesarayya,[40] Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Syama Prasad Mookerjee,[41] and others. 'Communists, socialists, liberals were all invited to speak at BHU,' remembered Hiralal Singh, who received his BA from BHU in 1937.[42] The visiting lecturers expanded the vision of the students, inspiring patriotism and challenging the students to think for themselves.

The BHU students were also encouraged to participate in physical activity. Sports was one of the means the University sought to establish a common bond between the students. Besides creating a team spirit, sports were regarded as especially important by the University administrators as a way of strengthening the physiques of the students. The nurturing of manly qualities was an important concern of the British universities

36 Ibid.

37 Ram Avadh Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.

38 Tej Bahadur Sapru, 'Convocation Address of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru (delivered 30 November 1941)', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 6 (1942), pp. 59–79.

39 Mirza M. Ismail, A Convocation Address of Sir Mirza M. Ismail (delivered 2 December 1945), *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 9 (1944–5), pp. 73–81.

40 'Convocation Address of Sir M. Visvesarayya', *Journal of BHU*, 1937, No. 1, p. 194.

41 Syama Prasad Mookerjee, '1940 Convocation Address', *Journal of BHU*, Vol. 5, 1940, pp. 30–1.

42 Hiralal Singh, interview, Banaras, September 1997.

in the training of men who could rule. The British often stereotyped their Hindu subjects as weak and unmanly, even effeminate:

> The Hindu youth is in greater need of discipline and organization than the average Mussalman. The Hindu is apt to be dowdy and to regard his dowdiness as equivalent to simplicity. Personal smartness and physical courage—in which Hindu boys are sadly deficient must go hand in hand with intellectual culture and mental vigour. Enlistment in and rudiments of military training together with genuine interest in sports should go far to banish the appearance of feebleness which is not infrequently produced on a casual notice of a dhoti-clad crowd of Hindu students.[43]

The effort to eliminate any hint of feebleness was considered an important task of the University and was as much of a political statement as it was a health concern. Pandit Malaviya believed that the physical weakness of Hindus contributed to communalism.[44] Because of the cowardice and weakness of Hindus, riots had taken place. Pandit Malaviya said that the Hindus were weak because they had forgotten their religion. Therefore, it was necessary to educate the Hindus in their religion. The second reason for the physical weakness of the Hindus was the practice of early marriage. Pandit Malaviya thought that if Hindus were strong, communal violence would end. He believed that a brahmachari lifestyle and exercise would restore strength and vitality to the Hindus.[45]

It was in the context of promoting discipline and physical rigour that military training and the Boy Scouts and RSS organizations were initiated at BHU. A military training corps was organized in the early years of the University. The Corps was under the supervision of the Indian Army. Students and professors were enrolled into platoons of the 8th Banaras Company. A staff sergeant who lived on the University premises gave regular instruction in drill.[46] The RSS also offered military-like drills and uniforms.

The RSS was a new organization and did not yet have a reputation for being a militant anti-Muslim organization. It promoted self-discipline, service for others, and devotion to religion and country. As one former student explains, 'The RSS was not so political then. It was considered

43 'The Hindu University', *Leader* (Allahabad), 31 May 1924.

44 Madan Mohan Malaviya in *Mahamana,* Vol. 1, Sitaram Chaturvedi, ed., translated by Ratnesh Pathak, p. 123.

45 Madan Mohan Malaviya, 'Punjab Hindu Sammelan, Lahore, 23 Feb 1924', in *Mahamana,* Vol. 1, Sitaram Chaturvedi, ed., pp. 120f.

46 BHU *Calendar 1922–5*, pp. 1212f.

like Boy Scouts.'[47] The organization was known for instilling virtues in young men. A current leader of the RSS at BHU (in the 1990s), Durga Singh Chauhan, related that the RSS became well known in the nationalist movement for giving physical and intellectual training, discipline and emotional preparation for the freedom movement. According to Chauhan, 'The leadership was in contact with all the national leaders including Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. The RSS was popular for training volunteers for annual sessions of Congress.'[48]

In 1930, a member of the RSS requested that the University allow a branch of the organization to be opened on campus to give physical training to students. The University permitted an organization to exist on campus and gave them permission in 1937 to build a small two-room building in which to store their exercise equipment. The University did not finance the RSS. Though Pandit Malaviya was a member of Congress, the Sanatana Dharma Sabha, and the Hindu Mahasabha, he was never a member of the RSS. The RSS, like the Boy Scouts, was one amongst many organizations at BHU. According to the former students, the group did not attract many members. As Rustam Satin recounted, 'there were a few RSS at BHU, but the majority of students were anti-British and pro-nationalist, not anti-Muslim.'[49] The regimented discipline offered by the military and the RSS, while recognized as a positive contribution to Hindu youth, never attracted a large following at BHU in the years before independence.

The University had its own programmes for physical fitness. For the purpose of encouraging students to participate in sports, the University designated twenty-two acres of playgrounds for football, hockey, cricket, tennis, basketball, and volleyball. The BHU Athletic Association organized sports. Two open-air gymnasiums provided exercise equipment and a wrestling arena. A stadium, the first of its kind in India offered facilities for track and other sports. The University instructors gave lessons in wrestling, gymnastics, boxing, and fencing. In the Indian clubs, lessons on the use of swords, spear, *pata*, *bana*, *malkham*, *santola*, *lejum*, along with exercise lessons were given. Swimming classes were also organized and a large swimming pool built.[50] The Maharaja of Bikaner

47 A. K. Narain, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
48 Durga Singh Chauhan, Reader in Electrical Engineering and current RSS leader at BHU, in interview with author, videotape, July 1995.
49 Rustam Saitin, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
50 *CHC Magazine*, Vol. 23, 1 March 1923, No. 3, p. 85.

donated a riding school.[51] Women also began to engage in sports activities at BHU. In 1934, the Athletic Association reported that for the last two years badminton, basketball, tennis, and ping-pong had been popular sports in the Women's Hostel.[52]

The competitive side of the University athletics was developed by match games, tournaments, annual sports, and gymnastics contests. Teams were organized according to hostels and classes which played against one another in football, hockey, tennis, volleyball, and tug-of-war. Every year there was competition for three tennis cups, the Raja Motichand Open Singles, the Sir Sunderlal Handicap Doubles, and the K. T. Telang Junior Doubles. In the Engineering College, the King and Coueslant Cups were played in football and hockey. The Central Hindu College offered a football shield in the memory of Babu Kali Das Manik, which was open to the teams of the various colleges in the United Provinces and the neighbouring provinces.

The students of BHU had many occasions to interact with the students of other colleges and universities, including AMU. Sports offered BHU students the opportunity to travel to the other colleges and compete against their teams. Teams were also sent out on tour every year to compete with teams in or outside the United Provinces. The BHU football, hockey, and cricket teams went on tour and played other college teams such as AMU, Allahabad University, and Osmania University.[53]

Poetry was also a means of connecting with other students. Both Urdu Mushairas and Hindi Kavi Sammelans were popular events at BHU. Both were featured in the All-India Speaking Competition in which the University participated annually.[54] The BHU students also participated in the Student Conference, which had branches at other universities and colleges. The Student Conference organized annuals between schools, as well as weekly meetings in which sports were organized, papers read, and speeches made. Essay and public speaking contests were also held. Even women were allowed to become the members of the Conference, but separate competitions were held for them, including one for sewing. There were annual competitions between all the branches of the Conference. The conference was active in BHU until the 1930s.[55]

51 Ibid., Vol. 21, 1 Jan. 1921, No. 1, p. 29.
52 'Athletic Association', *BHU Magazine*, Vol. 35, May 1934, No.1, p. 77.
53 *CHC Magazine*, Vol. 23, 1 Feb. 1923, No. 2, p. 58.
54 Ibid., Vol. 23, 1 Jan. 1923, No. 1, pp. 9, 23.
55 Rajendra Prasad, *Rajendra Prasad: Autobiography* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1957), p. 49.

The most popular competitive event at BHU was the All-India Inter-College Debate. The annual debate was an important event in the University and was given a prominent place in the convocation programme. In 1922, a debate was held during the convocation break, and BHU was proud to be awarded the trophy, which had been held the previous year by AMU.[56] Topics debated included 'India's securing for herself an independent and honourable place outside the British Empire.'[57] In the third annual debate, sixteen colleges were represented. The debate also included a category for women students. In 1924, the medal went to a female student from Annie Besant's Women's College at Kamaccha which was affiliated to the University. The various competitions with other Indian colleges, especially the sister institution of BHU, AMU, offered opportunity for the BHU students to develop a sense of commonality with students from other parts of India. Competition for awards and trophies between the students of BHU and AMU nurtured self-confidence and a healthy respect for the other team. Debate, which taught students how to express their opinions in a rational and orderly manner, was an important means of illustrating to the students that the opinions of others also had valid foundations.

Intellectual discussion and debate were the favourite pastime of the students of BHU. The hostel unions and various clubs regularly sponsored debates and lectures. In 1939 with the onset of World War II, the *Journal of BHU* reported on the activities of the Political Science Association that had been started on the campus. The Association was founded, 'in order to understand the burning political topics of the day to have discussions and debates on them, as also to inculcate the habit of extensive study and constructive thinking among students.'[58] A few of the activities of the Association included a debate on 6 September 1937, titled 'That Fascism Alone Can Solve the Problems of Present Day', another one on 29 December 1937, was titled, 'That Capitalism is a Menace to World Peace and Progress', and third on 8 December 1937, was titled, 'That the Proposed Indian Federation is Not in the Interest of the Country'. The lectures included 'Nazi Germany Today', by Dr Mehta of Munich; 'The Socialist Attitude Toward the Congress Ministry', by

56 No author given, '2nd All-India Debate', *CHC Magazine*, Vol. 23, 1 Jan. 1923, No. 1, p. 9.
57 *CHC Magazine*, Vol. 23, 1 Mar. 1923, No. 3, p. 88.
58 K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, editor, 'Political Science Association', *Journal of BHU,* Vol. 3, 1939, No.1, p. 38 ff.

Comrade Sajjad Zaheer, and 'A Comparative Study of Capitalism, Socialism and Fascism', by Professor Mukut Behari Lal.[59] In the Women's College, there were regular debates on many subjects and an annual inter-class debate. Leela Jasra remembers winning the debate in 1939 and receiving a copy of Jawaharlal Nehru's autobiography as the prize.[60]

On a university-wide scale, the University Parliament and the Student Union were the forums for debate. The students were allowed to speak on important topics in the University Parliament, which allowed them to explore current issues through organized debates. A. K. Narain, a former BHU student recalled, 'Parliament provided a platform for free speech at the university. It was nothing like Hyde Park, though. It was very orderly. The debates were well managed. The idea was to train future leaders for Indian politics.'[61] There was no censoring of ideas in these debates. Students of all persuasions were allowed to voice their positions. As Hiralal Singh said of the institution, 'The Parliament at BHU was very vocal. You could say anything there.'[62] Students expressed every shade of opinion. As a Student Union leader remembered, students supporting various ideological positions in India were represented in the Union, 'I was speaker of the Student Union. I had to deal with socialists, communists, Congress, and RSS groups. They were all at loggerheads, but I treated all groups equally.'[63] The existence of differing viewpoints did not create an atmosphere of animosity on the campus. Though the more conservative students disagreed with communists and socialists, respect for those of differing opinions was the order of the day, according to K. P. Singh:

> Every young man was fired by the ideal of socialism where everyone was equal, where everyone took care of the poor. There were quite a large number of socialists and communist students. They never won elections, but they were quite an influence. We did not have quarrels, the students exhibited dignified behaviour.[64]

The University administrators, including Pandit Malaviya, supported the acceptance of this diversity.

The relationship of Pandit Malaviya with Rustam Satin, a Parsi student and Marxist leader at BHU in the 1930s, illustrates the openness of

59 Ibid.
60 Leela Jasra Sharma, interview, Banaras, July 1995.
61 A. K. Narain, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
62 Hiralal Singh, interview, Banaras, November 1996.
63 K. P. Singh, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
64 Ram Avadh Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.

the founder of the University to the students of differing opinions. Rustam told how Pandit Malaviya first persuaded him to come to the University. Pandit Malaviya and Rustam had both gone to Calcutta to attend the Congress meeting in 1933. Pandit Malaviya was to preside at the meeting, but he was arrested. Rustam was a volunteer at the meeting and was a member of the All India Congress Committee. Rustam was also arrested and was beaten by the police in jail for trying to defend two female Bengali prisoners who had been kicked by the police. The matter got into the press and when Rustam and Pandit Malaviya were later released, Pandit Malaviya came to Calcutta to inquire about the injustices that took place in the jail. Rustam Satin gives an account of the Pandit's attitude toward the young Marxist:

> Pandit Malaviya came to Calcutta and started inquiry about what happened. Everyone came to him to give statements. I was called. I told him what happened. He asked, 'What is your education?' I told him I was prevented from taking the intermediate exam by Satyagraha. He took a liking to me and said, 'You should come to BHU. Without higher education you will not be able to do much.' I told him I couldn't because my father would give no money. He put his hand on my head and said, 'Take me as your father.' I said nothing but 'I am a communist and there is a lot of difference between your ideas and my ideas. If I go to BHU, I will continue to do my propaganda among students and you will not like it.' He asked me why I had come to Calcutta to Congress. I told him I only came to help. He said, 'You may be a Congressman or a communist, but we are all under British rule and neither your ideas or mine can be applied. We have the same interest in removing the British government.' I told him I would come. He did not think I would come, so he wanted me to go with him then. There were no fees for me—no hostel fees, no college fees. . . . I went everyday to see Malaviya.[65]

Rustam Satin explained that at BHU he did indeed continue his political activities, unfettered by the University. When the Government of India banned the Communist Party, BHU communist students met secretly on the roof, under the Hindu-temple spire of their College. They decided that though party activity was illegal, discussing and teaching Marxist theory was not:

> There were communist boys from Bombay in BHU. We would sit up under the *mandir* on the roof in secret and discuss Marxist theories because they were illegal. I told them we had to make propaganda. They said, 'No, you will get us in trouble.' I said, 'No, the Marxist party is illegal but Marxist thought is not illegal.' I posted a notice that I was holding a class in the common room. One

65 Rustam Satin, interview, Banaras, August 1997.

hundred people came. Some left, but soon many people from north and south (like Rajesh Rao) became communists. No one objected. I was thought to be Malaviya's favourite boy.[66]

Though Pandit Malaviya was strongly against Marxism, the students were not prevented from offering classes in Marxist theory and converting other students to their ideas. Students were given every opportunity to exercise freedom of speech. A very liberal atmosphere pervaded the campus. When an incidence of censorship did occur, it was at the behest of the BHU students. As Rustam Satin recalls, he and the other students objected to Pandit Malaviya inviting a famous British scholar to speak on the campus because he was believed to be an imperialist:

> An occasion came when I struggled against Malaviya. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya had gone to London for Round Table discussion. A professor in London came to see Malaviya. The professor was an imperialist-minded person. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya invited him to come to BHU to give lectures even though he was imperialist—because of his scholarship. We declared that if he comes, we will not allow him to enter the campus. I started a big movement. Malaviya said, 'Whether right or wrong, I invited him and I cannot take it back.' I said, 'No, he should not come.' There was a big movement by the students. Malaviya was upset. He said, 'You will be satisfied by smashing my University.' I respected him and left without saying anything. But Bombay and Allahabad students, who had heard about BHU, also started a movement. The professor heard about it. He decided not to come. I stopped going to Malaviya's house when he was there. For two months I did not meet him. . . . But one day he came suddenly and caught my hand and said, 'Where were you two months? Why did you not come?' He added, 'Look here, I do not agree with what you did, but you did not do it out of a personal aim, you did it out of patriotism. You should not be afraid' I respected him greatly for this. For the first time, I touched his feet and went away. I started going again. BHU became a great unofficial center for Marxist education—holding classes one after the other. Malaviya did not object to that. He was a very democratic person. Many people do not know this.[67]

Pandit Malaviya allowed, even encouraged a diversity of political opinions to be expressed on the campus. But not all students were interested in political ideologies. As Hiralal Singh, a former student who became a professor of history at BHU told of his own interests, 'I have never been involved in politics. I believe in an objective approach to the study of history and politics; I will not commit myself to any creed. If you are a

66 Rustam Satin, interview, September 1997.
67 Ibid.

Marxist, you see all things according to a Marxist view.'[68] There were students who just wanted to do well in their studies and were not interested in becoming involved in political debates or activism. But they were in the minority at BHU. Students were very interested in political events in India and abroad.

The students of BHU had entered the University to receive an education in a Hindu environment and a broader perspective on life. The diversity provided by students and professors from the various regions of India created a rare opportunity for BHU students. While the public sometimes protested the outside influence, the students apparently appreciated it. As one student reported, 'While there was complaint in UP against the many non-Hindi speakers teaching at the university, there was no such feeling among the students. They wanted an opportunity to get a broader view. The Biharis wanted to get out of their cell.'[69] The students of BHU learned how to exist among people of diverse opinions, how to express their opinions in a dignified forum of public debate; they learned how to organize themselves and work together for a common cause, whether it be for the purpose of organizing a glutton contest or for a major civil disobedience. The hundreds of students sharing the hostels of BHU apparently valued toleration, civility, and a good deal of humour. Respect for professors and wardens and a desire to maintain the decorum of the University halls and hostels insured good behaviour on the part of the students. A sense of camaraderie developed among the students that transcended caste and regional boundaries. Hindu identity, respect for law and order, and patriotism were all evident at BHU. For a while, it seemed that the vision of the British and the ruling princes for the University had come to pass.

Pandit Malaviya was against political activism on part of the students. In order to acquire the support of the Government of India, the Indian States, and the loyalist supporters, Pandit Malaviya had to maintain this position. He himself, however, was engaged in many political activities. Indeed, the University was never anti-political. The entire University was a means of resistance to British superiority and dominance. Bringing forth the past accomplishments of India in the academic courses on ancient literature and culture, the presentation of an Indian point of view in subjects such as history, political science, and economics, and the proving of Indian competence in modern fields of

68 Hiralal Singh, interview, Banaras, November 1996.
69 A. K. Narain, interview, Banaras, September 1997.

education, even technology and science, were all vital in promoting a sense of pride that would no longer stand for British governance of India. The BHU, as an institution, was never aloof from or against the movement for independence. Pandit Malaviya believed that students should first be educated before engaging in political activity. An education would give them an understanding of the political realities and the ability to judge matters for themselves. In 1920, when Gandhi called for non-cooperation, Pandit Malaviya was able to persuade the majority of the students to continue their studies. This position of Pandit Malaviya not only drew the support of the government and the princes, but of many parents who had sent their children to the University because of its conservative stance towards political activity. But as the movement for independence grew, many BHU students wanted to show their support.

In the early years of BHU, visible support of the nationalist movement, such as the wearing of khadi, was a radical act and one that would have been forbidden by many families. While wearing the simple, hand-spun clothes later became a badge of honour for Indians, for many years it was considered a sign of aberrant behaviour. Rustam Satin, who was already a member of Congress and deprived of his father's support when he entered BHU, remembered first wearing khadi as a schoolboy. Rustam was born in Karachi, the son of a Parsi businessman. His father ran an export-import business. Rustam says the family was quite westernized and he attended an English-medium school. When Gandhi called for non-cooperation, the school ended its relationship with the government and became a national school. Instead of the school uniform, everyone began to wear khadi. Rustam said he wanted to wear khadi, but he knew it was against his father's wishes. Rustam explained, 'My father made me wear a suit and tie to school. I asked the headmaster to allow me to wear khadi. He did. I changed clothes before going home. I would have received a beating at home for not wearing my suit and tie.'[70] Rustam's act of wearing khadi was both an act of rebellion against the government and against his father. But he wore khadi only when he was at school, not in front of his family.

At the University, students were living apart from their families, often not seeing them for months, and there was more opportunity to express themselves. While students remained at home, deference to the authority of the father and dependence on the nurturing of the mother were the expected role of young men and women. But on matters of

70 Rustam Satin, interview, Banaras, September 1997.

ideology and general social outlook, many students felt completely alienated from their parents. Pandit Malaviya's own son, Govind, who was a student at BHU, led a protest against Pandit Malaviya's decision to retain the government charter in 1929 when Gandhi called for a boycott against the government institutions. At the University, where students were exposed to a multiplicity of ideas and encouraged to express their own ideas boldly, students were more likely to put aside parental admonitions and attempt to make their own statements. Students were also more vulnerable to pressure from their peers. Young men began to wear khadi at BHU, which was considered not only a sign of support for nationalism, but also an appropriate expression of the 'simplicity and high-mindedness' of BHU.

Young residents of the Women's College, even against the will of their parents, also began to wear khadi. One of the students, Shanti (later Shanti Sadiq Ali), came from a well-to-do family that had close connections with the British. Her father had been educated in Glasgow and was an ICS officer, and her uncle was a member of the British Council. Shanti's family was against the political activities of the Congress especially the Non-cooperation Movement. In the BHU Women's Hostel, Shanti became close friends with Leela Jasra (later Leela Sharma), who had taken up spinning khadi. Due to Leela's influence, Shanti took up wearing khadi in support of the freedom movement. When Shanti's parents became aware of her radical behaviour, they were very angry with her for not respecting their wishes.[71] Shanti, however, did not desist from her behaviour. She graduated from BHU to become a dynamic figure in Congress. Though her father offered to send her to Oxford to study, she chose to work with the Congress in the villages, and later, during Partition, in the refugee camps. In 1957, she married Sadiq Ali, a Muslim. Sadiq Ali was the general secretary of the Congress, and later became a Member of Parliament. Shanti was one of the many BHU students for whom support of the nationalist movement required a break with the will of their elders.

Pandit Malaviya, as founder of the University and Vice Chancellor was the kulapati, the father of BHU. As support for national movement grew, students also began to challenge his desire that the students should refrain from political activity. When Pandit Malaviya invited the Prince of Wales to BHU to receive an honorary degree at a special convocation, a large number of students boycotted the occasion, causing embarrass-

71Shanti Sadiq Ali, interview, New Delhi, 18 September 1997.

ment to Pandit Malaviya. Interestingly, the bold behaviour of the students, was the product of their University experience.

The administrators of BHU, whether knowingly or not, had set the stage for student participation. The University had been founded for the purpose of uplifting pride in Hindu religion and culture in the face of colonial domination. Students were exposed to the nationalist leaders at the University. The University professors presented Indian positions on many issues. The students were encouraged to explore ideological options and to be vocal about their opinions. In a time of increasing nationalist sentiment, the University offered a dynamic environment for youthful enthusiasm. As one former student recalled:

> Those were the days when *Satyagrah* against the British was in full swing, and students too made bold to rise up against the excesses and often times to register their heartfelt sympathy with the downtrodden; often there was an urge to launch upon some demonstration of patriotism. Students hailing from different parts of the country intermingled with the common desire to assert the superiority of Hindu culture and to prove that in way they could be taunted as possessing capabilities inferior to those of their rulers. Floodgates of oratory were thrown open in the University Parliament, debates, and tea parties. There were lectures by learned scholars from outside, and we as students enjoyed the treats.[72]

The BHU students from various parts of India experienced a sense of unity during their days at the University. Students were trained in self-government and organizational skills in the University Parliament, the hostel unions, and the various student associations. Pandit Malaviya himself was one of the most active members of Congress and the students were well aware of his many activities. All the students were encouraged to be leaders. They were taught to be patriotic and self-sacrificing. Service was the keyword of BHU; it was almost a religion unto itself. The students were ideal carriers of nationalism.

The University students responded to the growing restlessness in India for self-government. Gandhi's call for civil disobedience in the early 1930s had a significant impact on BHU. When Gandhi first launched the Satyagraha Campaign in March 1930 with his walk to the sea to make salt, there was a stirring of student interest. The government reported that on that day only a few students left their classes and assembled under a Congress flag and sang songs.[73] Over the next few months, a number of members of BHU became involved in various types

72 Dhanpat Singh, 'Reminiscences of My Students Days', *BHU Old Boys Association—Calcutta 1963–64*, Banaras: BHU, 1964, p. 49.

of protest on the campus and in the surrounding area. According to government reports, a member of BHU named Ram Murat Naidu and others addressed five hundred students on the satyagraha agitation, two BHU students spoke on khaddar in the districts of Ghazipur and Ballia, and a large number of students participated in making salt in the village of Udit Nagar.[74] The students formed a procession and went around the campus and Banaras preaching the boycott of cloth and the students of the Ayurvedic College made salt in front of the Training Corps sergeant's bungalow on campus.[75] When Gandhi was arrested in May, the students attended a Congress meeting in Banaras in large numbers, but as the University was closed for the summer holidays, there was little activity on campus. When classes resumed in July, Congress members, including a number of students, began to picket classes heavily in order to persuade Pandit Malaviya to close the University. As the picketing became increasingly aggressive, Pandit Malaviya was able to persuade the local Congress Committee to suspend picketing. The agitation, which was rising amongst the students, was given added impetus when Pandit Malaviya was arrested for his own participation in illegal Congress activity. On 1 August 1930, Pandit Malaviya went to Bombay to attend a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee of which he was a member. The government had banned the Committee as an unlawful association. While at the meeting, the members of the Committee marched in a procession to celebrate the tenth death anniversary of Lokmanya Tilak and were summarily arrested for defying the government ban. The arrest of Pandit Malaviya resulted in a tremendous response by the members of BHU. More than a hundred students, with the support of university staff and people of Banaras, decided to go by train to Bombay to protest the arrest and perform satyagraha. The *Hindu Herald* (Lahore) of 9 August 1930 reported the departure of the students:

> Benaras, 6 Aug.—Last Sunday was a red-letter day in the history of the Benares Hindu University. All the students and the whole of the holy city of Benares gathered together to give a hearty send off to that batch of 100 student volunteers who had decided to proceed to Bombay to offer Satyagraha there and break the ban of the authorities in the Fort area. In that short interval of 30 hours at

73 Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces, Education Department to the Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Education, 19 August 1930, Education File, UP State Archives.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.

their disposal enthusiastic young men arranged a grand farewell. In less than six hours they collected a sum of 2000 rupees out of which 1000 were donated by a generous millionaire of Benares. Exactly at 6 o'clock in the evening the volunteers started with firm steps to play their part in the historic events which might stir the whole student community through the length and breadth of India. Every volunteer took with him a small baggage which weighed not more than 5 seers. They looked more of soldiers who were going to the field to fight the battle of the country than the students of a University. All of the volunteers were dressed in khaddar shirts, shorts, Gandhi caps and chaplis[sic] only. Just before their start, they had a short prayer and a small speech describing the duties of a Satyagrahi. They then were garlanded by the students. After all these formalities were over the volunteers marched to the bungalow of Pt. Malaviya where Mrs. Govind Malaviya gave them her blessings and offered them flowers and *tilak*. From there they went to the Principal and different members of the staff and received their blessings and then marched off to the Railway Station. Though it was already dark, yet a crowd had come out of their houses to see these volunteers off. It is decided that the volunteers will first go to Allahabad where they will do some propaganda work and then leave for Bombay. It is also decided that the second batch of another 100 students will start immediately after the news of the arrest of the first batch is received.[76]

Though Pandit Malaviya was released on the day of his arrest, he was arrested again in Delhi on 27 August 1930 for attending another Congress Working Committee meeting. He was sentenced to six months imprisonment and sent to the Central Jail at Naini, Allahabad.

The political activity of the students increased with picketing at the University and protests in Banaras. Even the female students participated in the movement. Leela Sharma recalls that when she was a student, Gandhi came and held prayer meetings in front of the Women's College. He asked the students to collect money for the freedom movement. Leela said that she and the others gave money, but also took off their jewellery, bangles, and earrings and offered them to Gandhi.[77] She said that Gandhi seemed like a god to them and all the women always kept abreast of what he was doing in the country. Some of the women spun thread on spinning wheels, while others joined in picketing and in the processions at the University and in Banaras.[78] It was evident that

76 'Banaras Hindu University Satyagrahis', *Hindu Herald*, Lahore, 9 August, 1930, Education File, UP State Archives, Lucknow.

77 Leela Sharma, interview with author, videotape, November 1996, Banaras; Shanti Sadiq Ali, in interview, 18 September 1997, said that she took off five of her gold bangles and gave them to Gandhi. But when Gandhi asked her for her remaining bangles, she withdrew her hand.

the conservative nature of the Women's College did not necessarily produce passive women. The women students of the University were shown to exhibit exceptionable daring and ability. BHU quickly gained a reputation for being a major centre of sedition. The example of the University's founder, Pandit Malaviya had been the reason for many of students to take up direct action.

The most intense involvement of the BHU students occurred during the Quit India Movement of 1942. On 8 August of that year, Gandhi had presented a resolution before the All-India Congress Working Committee calling for total non-cooperation with the government until the British left India. The action was particularly threatening for the government at a time when the Japanese were driving the Allied forces out of Burma. After the Committee passed the Quit India Resolution, Gandhi was arrested. Within days, many BHU students were engaged in acts of sabotage against the British. The students engaged in the activity were of all manner of ideological persuasion. Muslim students participated along with Hindu students. Banaras was a strategic location for British communications and transportation. Students inflicted severe damage on the railway station, blew up railway lines, burned police stations, and cut telegraph wires in Banaras and the surrounding area. After several days, the Indian Army occupied the campus and drove the students out. Many students who returned to their homes, continued to engage in seditious activity. Five girls of the Women's Hostel, including Damayanti Jasra, broke the lock of the Congress office in Lanka, the area just outside of the BHU campus, after the army had sealed it.[79] As the Army attempted to restore order in Banaras, the government banned all the local newspapers, such as *Aaj*. In Banaras, it was Leela Jasra (later Leela Sharma) and her sisters Damayanti and Susheela, students of the Women's College of BHU, who kept the public informed by publishing a handwritten newspaper. The girls gathered information on what was happening, who had been arrested, and where they were taken. Every week they would use a cyclostyle machine to publish the newspaper. They avoided detection by changing the location of the cyclostyle machine every few days. The sisters distributed the news by walking to banks of the Ganga and furtively passing the newspaper, which was hidden inside *puris* (round, flat breads), to men who were expecting them. The word would be sent out beforehand that the girl with the puris would be wearing a

78 Leela Sharma, interview, videotape, November 1996, Banaras.
79 Ibid.

certain sari. Leela Sharma relates, 'There was such danger. We had to be very cautious. There were two CID posted in front of our house at one time.' Leela's family also harboured BHU students and a faculty leader who was wanted by the police. Leela later married one of the men her family hid in the storeroom overnight. He was Radhe Shyam Sharma, a chemistry professor at BHU and Congress member who was one of the organizers of the sabotage in Banaras. Sharma had been directing operations from a campus building, but had to escape dressed as a sadhu (holy man) when the army made a search of the campus.[80] It was only through the efforts of S. Radhakrishnan that the army left the campus. Pandit Malaviya had been wise to bring in S. Radhakrishnan to take his place as Vice Chancellor in 1939. Radhakrishnan was well respected among many of the British officials for his apolitical stance and his scholarly achievements at Oxford. If Radhakrishnan had not been able to intervene with the government officials in 1942 during the Quit India Movement, it is doubtless that the University would have been closed permanently. But the University was reopened in stages, beginning in November of that year. The University went on as before; exams and convocation were held. The *Journal of BHU*, which was published after the Quit India Movement, contained no accounts of the closure of the university, nor of the tumult the students caused in the area. There was only a subtle reference to the situation in one of the journal articles. As article on telegraph codes mentioned that many telegraphs stations in the area were not in operation at the time of the writing of the article. The author wrote, 'Any visitor to the telegraph counter of a *station of operation* will find how a telegraphic instrument works.'[81] While it was widely known and admitted that BHU students had been responsible for widespread sabotage, most of the students were never prosecuted and returned to their studies.

Pandit Malaviya played a remarkable role at the University during the turbulent years of the independence movement. In spite of his own willingness to become increasingly supportive of agitational politics, he believed that it was also his duty to keep the University functioning. Malaviya never veered from his official position that it was best for the country that students should delay political participation until after completing their studies. At the same time, he was sympathetic to the feel-

80 Ibid.

81 S. C. Guha, 'A Telegraph and Wireless Code for the Standard India Alphabet', *Journal of Banaras Hindu University*, Vol. 7, 1943, Nos. 2–3, p. 231.

ings of the students and their desire to contribute to the movement. As the student involvement in political activity increased, Pandit Malaviya never admonished the students to refrain from participation in political activity, but neither did he encourage them to participate. He gave an ambiguous message to the students. As a former student remembered, some people at the University were clearly against participation, but Pandit Malaviya left his position unclear, 'Malaviya didn't say, "Don't participate." People would say "Malaviya said this or that." But we did not know whether it was so'.[82] Malaviya could never be openly supportive of student participation though, or else the government would have promptly closed the University. At the onset of World War II, Kashi Vidyapith was declared illegal because of the political activity of its students and faculty. BHU came dangerously close to being closed on several occasions while Pandit Malaviya was the Vice Chancellor. The government delayed sending funds to BHU and a number of princes withdrew their pledges when it seemed the University students were becoming seditious. It was a challenge for Pandit Malaviya on the one hand to prevent political activity on campus, and at the same time not to create an oppressive atmosphere. Pandit Malaviya went to great lengths to retain the support of the government, while at the same time protecting his students. As a former student explained, 'Malaviya had to follow the middle path. It was a tightrope walk.'[83] His strategy was ingenious. The government demanded that the University should not allow any seditious students to attend BHU. When the government accused Pandit Malaviya of admitting seditious students, he would claim ignorance of the students' background before entering the University. If BHU students committed acts against the government, it was never on campus, so Pandit Malaviya could deny responsibility. Usually the police were unable to provide proof that specific students were involved in activity; they only knew that BHU students had been involved. Without proof, they could not fault Pandit Malaviya for not expelling suspected students. The government gave the police permission to search the hostel rooms of suspects. But they had to first get permission from Pandit Malaviya before entering the University. Pandit Malaviya would make sure the boys were warned before the police arrived at their doors. On the rare occasions when the police did not inform Pandit Malaviya, he chastised them strongly. There were only a few occasions when Pandit

82 A. K. Narain, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
83 K. P. Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.

Malaviya was forced to expel students because of overwhelming evidence. Pandit Malaviya, however, had his doubts about the participation of the students in the political agitation. A former student and professor related that Pandit Malaviya had questioned Gandhi of the wisdom of encouraging students to participate in revolutionary activity:

> Malaviya asked Gandhi in 1935, 'We are teaching and preaching non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Have you given thought as to what effect it is going to produce on the youth after we get independence?' Gandhi replied, 'Yes, this is likely to produce a very undesirable effect on the people as a whole. Practising civil disobedience might become a habit. But you will agree that independence is our first priority. We will have to deal with bad effects when we are not fighting the British.' Mahadev Desai narrated the conversation later on. Malaviya died six months before independence and Gandhi six months after. Other leaders did not give thought to the problem after independence. They wanted to use the students for their own political purposes. So this kind of violence continues. BHU played a leading part in the problem. It started in BHU and spread in northern India.[84]

While Pandit Malaviya apparently realized the risk involved, both to the students and the country, in encouraging students to participate in revolutionary activity, events hardly left him any option. It was ironical that the man who had founded BHU with the hope of inspiring the religious values of subordination and loyalty would live to see his students become renowned revolutionaries.

BHU students of all political persuasions, whether or not they were members of Congress, participated in the anti-government activity. Students who were against the use of violence and those who believed in violence all worked together. There was little apparent friction between groups holding different ideologies. As long as they were working against the British, they were working on the same side. Their activities often overlapped. A. K. Narain, a student who experienced the Quit India Movement recalled:

> In 1942, although it was called Gandhi's Quit India Movement, there were many people who participated who were not Congress members. Such a mass movement was impossible to control. Even elements in Congress were not so non-violent. . . . At BHU there were two groups. One group would walk about 15 miles a day and tell people what was happening. They would go in groups of ten or fifteen. For the first week it was like that. Then the police came and the

84 Ram Avadh Singh, interview, Banaras, August 1997.

students went underground. . . . Sharma and Gairola were the leaders. The mezzanine floor of the Birla Hostel became our centre. We had code words.[85]

The other group was led by Raj Narayan, a law graduate. He said:

We will cut wires, destroy things. He was later a minister who opposed Indira Gandhi. He was a rowdy type. The two groups met together but then separated. We did not say, 'You are wrong.' Nobody asked question whether someone was violent or not. Both groups were underground.[86]

Even among the Congress members, there were those who turned to violence. After escaping from BHU campus during the Quit India Movement, Radhe Shyam Sharma, the BHU chemistry professor, went underground and used his knowledge of chemistry to make bombs.[87] Wealthy supporters financed his activities. Among Congress members, there was no common agreement over the issue whether non-violence was the best method of resistance or not. Even within the families of students, there were differing perspectives on how to deal with the British. One former student, K. P. Singh, recalled that though he was not interested in politics, his immediate family included Congress members and an anarchist:

My father and my uncle were Congress people. I was not active in politics. I liked my studies. Once when I was at home in Jaunpur we saw the police converging on our house on horseback. One of my uncles was a member of the Kranti, the violent, activist group, so there were certain things in the house for bomb-making and pistols. So when the police were sighted we threw those things out in the field.[88]

The family worked together to protect the anarchist members of the family. There was apparently an understanding among many Indians who believed in different methodologies of resistance that they were all in league. This general conspiracy was evident at BHU. In the face of danger, ideological differences were ignored. Gandhi himself was very ambivalent toward the use of violence. There were some Congress members as well who believed in the use of violence or who looked upon perpetrators of violence against the British as heroes. At BHU, members of the University,

85 A. K. Narain, interview, Banaras, September 1997.
86 Ibid.
87 For more information, see an account of Radhe Shyam Sharma's activities in Francis G. Hutchin's *Spontaneous Revolution: The Quit India Movement* (Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1971), pp. 293 f.
88 K. P. Singh, interview, Banaras, September 1997.

regardless of caste, creed, or political persuasions joined together in common cause under the banner of nationalism.

Nationalism came to be a defining feature of BHU. But beyond the desire for independence from Britain, a single political agenda never dominated the various student organizations and traditions of the campus; there was too great diversity of thought. The graduates were socialists and Marxists, capitalists, and freedom fighters, and those who did not care at all for politics of any sort. Fired by the fluid ideas flowing freely around them, the students were free to break through the inertia of the past. The limitations upon personal achievement imposed both by colonialism and by traditional family and caste boundaries were broken. As the previous chapter has argued, the very fact that the University was designated Hindu, was situated in Banaras, and promoted pride in Hindu culture and traditions, gave the students the confidence to exert themselves and to explore new areas of thought and experience. Upon coming to the University, students were exposed to a great variety of ideas and ideologies. The experience of attending BHU allowed students to step outside the boundaries of family, caste, and communities, which had previously determined their perceptions. Students from various parts of India, from various castes and economic backgrounds lived together, ate together, and studied and played together. Although a host of guest lecturers visited the campus, from swamis, to leading politicians, the most popular were always the liberals. The students were encouraged to voice their own ideas, to debate them rigorously, and to question all manner of authority. Debates were the most popular activity on the campus and were held in the context of the University Parliament, the Debating Society, the hostel unions, and the provincial organizations. Differences in opinion and ideology were debated vigorously in an atmosphere conducive to mutual respect. In the mingling of ideas, a dynamic civic sphere emerged in which the entire spectrum of current ideologies and perspective was not only tolerated, but also encouraged. The students of BHU, proud of their Hindu culture, made a significant statement that religious identity was not necessarily a barrier to liberality and cooperation in a pluralist society. Tradition was never a straightjacket that the students were forced to wear. More often than not, BHU was the place for the unseating of tradition.

Conclusion

During the early years, Banaras Hindu University, which intended to revive Hinduism and unite Hindus, fostered a dynamic liberal atmosphere. As has been shown, a cosmopolitan atmosphere pervaded the campus during the years before independence. Caste and regional differences were downplayed. Traditional Indian subjects were offered at the University, but student interest was minimal. Religious instruction in Hinduism, originally made compulsory, became optional. Students and professors alike held diverse political and religious viewpoints. The University hosted an array of guest speakers from socialists to imperialists. The University journals published articles reflective of Hindu apologetic thinking, but there were also articles critical of the mindset. The student organizations were also diverse. The RSS was on campus, but so were the Marxists. According to the students, there was much more interest in socialism than in the message of the RSS. The picture that emerged of BHU was one where the lifestyle of the students was fairly conservative and 'old-fashioned' by contemporary western standards but where pluralism and the expression of a multiplicity of ideas were embraced. There was a pride in *desi* (country or rural things), of things not British, and these were some of the things identified as specifically Hindu. At the same time there was also pride in mastering that which had been previously in the possession of westeners, from science and technology, the institution of the University itself, and the concept of nationalism, and making it the possession of Indians.

The overwhelming sentiment among the students was nationalism. There was no evidence of the formulation of Hindu nationalism at the University. The education at BHU could not be considered nationalist, at least not in the manner as Gandhi's nationalist alternative to BHU, Kashi Vidyapith. At the Vidyapith, all the courses were taught from a nationalist perspective. The students were given more schooling in spinning and volunteerism than in what Gandhi called 'book-learning'. BHU students were offered a much broader education, especially in the arts. The em-

phasis was on presenting students with a wide range of thinking, and encouraging critical thinking, not on indoctrination in a particular ideology.

The education at BHU did not focus on the exclusion of non-Hindus from national identity. Religious identity was encouraged, but not religious antagonism. Communalism in the sense of hatred against Muslims was not accepted at the University, as according to Pandit Malaviya, it went against the very principles of both religion and nationalism. Anti-Muslim sentiment was frowned upon at the University. As a former student explained:

> Another point, however, also needs to be mentioned. And that was about the attempt to make the Hindu University a centre of Hindu Culture . . . . A general feeling in favour of Hinduism was created, but it never became in those years, at least, a communal centre. Not only were there Mohammedan students, but nationalism also had a greater appeal among the staff and students.[1]

The Hindu nationalist message was not a drawing card. Muslims were not the enemy; they were the competing team in academic debates and sports. Aligarh Muslim University was regarded as the sister university of BHU. Pandit Malaviya may have had a similar position towards competing Muslim interest in the political arena. Whatever his politics, it did not lead to an agenda at the University to instill an attitude that would withhold from others the same freedoms and rights as the Hindus were seeking from the British. In contrast to the well-defined ideology and regimentation of right-wing organizations, the University did not engage in systematic ideological indoctrination or discipline. BHU, in the years before Indian independence, was not a hotbed of communalism. There was little on the campus that could be described as religious bigotry, and none that was supported or institutionalized by the University. And yet BHU stood at the centre of Hindu identity politics.

Pandit Malaviya and the other founders of BHU, including the British officials involved in the matter, intended that a Hindu education would unite an extremely diverse population of Hindus into a united body, a single Hindu identity. The original intent of the Government of India officials in chartering BHU was to help secure British domination of India. In the face of growing nationalism in the United Provinces, they hoped that the development of both Hindu and Muslim universities would further divide the two communities. It must be remembered that the

1 Gyanchand, Oral Histories Transcript, Nehru Memorial Library.

British played a significant role in drawing distinctions between Hindus and Muslims in India and making the two communities more self-conscious. The Indian Census not only used categories of religion, which had never been done in England, but it also employed the term 'Hindu' as an umbrella term for a vast multiple of different castes and religious background. The institution of separate electorates based on the religion, and numerical count of religious groups in the census, worked to drive a wedge between the elitist Hindus and Muslims. Secondly, the British hoped to retain the loyalty of the orthodox Brahmans in the United Province, who were calling for the creation of a Hindu university. Thirdly, the British officials involved in the chartering of BHU hoped the University would help to unite the Hindus of India under a single banner—loyalty to the British throne. So it cannot be overlooked that the promotion of a unified Hindu identity was in part a contrivance of the British individuals, who saw in it potential benefit for their administration.

The Hindu supporters of the University initially fell into league with British plans for the University. They agreed that religion could be used to deter lawlessness and nurture loyalty to the Government of India among the educated youth of India. For this aim, they wanted to create a unified Hindu population. The creation of Muslim and Hindu voting blocks was also a motivation for uniting Hindus politically and ideologically. While it can be argued that supporting Hindu interests was only falling into the trap laid by the British, it must also be considered that separate electorates were the political reality of the day. There was also much more to the story behind uplifting Hindu identity than the contest between political rivals. In reality, self-conscious Hindu and Muslim identities arose, in large part, in response to the colonial situation, not in antagonism to each other.

Under colonialism, western religion and culture threatened to eclipse India. British administrators and missionaries often described Hinduism as a degenerate, heathen religion. The promotion of Hinduism as a religion equal or superior to Christianity was one of the chief concerns of Pandit Malaviya. If there had been no challenge from the West, no vilification of Hindu belief and custom, there would have most likely been no movement for the revival of Hinduism. But it was not only western antagonism to Indian religious traditions, but also western scholarly appreciation and interpretation of those traditions that fuelled a renewed interest in their religion among Hindus. The textbook on Hinduism used by the University, for example, was written by a European, as were many of the other texts on Indian tradition and philosophy used by the Univer-

sity. European scholars, comparing Hinduism to Christianity, had described the divergent traditions as a single religion. In response to these descriptions, BHU attempted to teach Hinduism as a single, coherent religious system.

The overwhelming influence of colonialism on the construction of BHU is evident. But what occurred at the University was not simply a matter of imperial hegemony. The Hindus pushed back. Administrators, teachers, and students all made choices regarding how the University would accommodate itself to colonial situation. The University chose not to imitate western architecture in the construction of the campus. BHU quickly realized that Hinduism was not to be taught along the same lines as Christianity. Compulsory religious education, common in British schools, was understood to be un-Hindu. Students and faculty chose to wear Indian attire and to embrace simple living. These choices were not simply a matter of always preferring Indian ways, they were about creating a Hindu identity that stood in contrast to, but also in equality with Christian and Muslim identity.

Part of the new Hindu identity prided itself in abandoning old ways and mastering the new subjects. When given the opportunity to study traditional Indian subjects, most students chose what had been western subjects. Sons from long lineages of the priestly profession chose to abandon study of the Vedas and the performance of rituals. They took up engineering or medicine. While the University encouraged enrolment in the College of Theology by offering free tuition, the consensus of the student body was that the new books and new ideas were more interesting. This did not mean, though, that the students were abandoning their culture. Even when the BHU engineering students donned white dress shirts and prided themselves on their work ethic, and the high caste Brahman took up the physician's scalpel, they did so as proud Hindus. Western subjects were sanctified as they were brought into the corpus of *jnana* (knowledge). Professional occupations based on this knowledge were considered worthy means of livelihood for even the highest castes. The university teaching profession was embraced as a sacred and sacrificial path, as karmayoga. The interpretation of western subjects and professions profoundly influenced the continuance of traditional caste occupations. While western professional positions were acceptable, for high caste Hindus, they were equally so for all other Indians regardless of caste or religion. Barriers created by inherited occupations began to crumble.

Religious barriers also collapsed. For Hindus, being religious had

translated roughly as righteous performance of one's dharma or religious duties. For the majority of the Indians, this entailed adhering to specific practices, particular to one's caste, region, and stage of life. For many people this included performing of one's daily devotions to a deity. When students at BHU said that they were not very religious, they meant that they did not perform daily devotional rituals. People who spent a great deal of time saying their prayers at the home shrine or temple were considered very religious. Religion was associated with regular performance of devotion rituals and the reading of scriptures. Devotional religion took a multitude of forms depending of deity, caste, region, and personal preference.

This type of traditional devotional religion did not thrive at BHU. It would have been impossible for the University to impose a single, unifying practice. Students saw the performance of rituals as something that their grandparents did, an old-fashioned practice. There was little interest at BHU in grounding modern Hindu identity in morning prayers and in the study of the literature of a dead language. The lack of high enrolment, even when tuition was free, indicates that students were not drawn to the study of Sanskrit texts or to learn the performance of the rituals (*karmakand*). The practices that were considered traditional ways of being religious were not embraced as being necessary to the Hindu identity at BHU.

BHU prided itself on adopting a modern definition of Hindu identity, based on religion defined in its broadest sense. Hindu identity was vaguely and spaciously defined with culture. The location of the University in Banaras, the 'eternal city', the mythologizing of the origin of the BHU lands, and the association of the institution with the spiritual quest for immortality were powerful means of constructing a resistant Hindu identity. The poverty, simple dress, and lack of western manners and polished etiquette, which had made Indians inferior for the British, became symbols of strength and pride at BHU. The simplicity of lifestyle at the campus and the grandeur of the Hindu architecture were seen as truly illustrative of Indian culture. It was saffron walls, sacred ground, simple clothes and bare feet, and the missing clock tower that colored the atmosphere of the University 'Hindu'. It was not common caste, regional or economic background, or particular religious and political doctrine that united Hindus, but a very diffuse sense of Hinduness in which anyone could participate.

Hindu identity was not derived from a particular sectarian belief or practice. This did not preclude those who participated in the identity,

though, from being religious in traditional ways if they so chose. Hinduness, once imposed upon Indians as a Census category distinct from Muslim and Christian, was now enthusiastically embraced. A neutral Hindu identity need not have been planned or contrived. Only a diffuse sense of Hindu identity could unite Hindus from all over India. Any attempt to set boundaries would have excluded many. For instance, Pandit Malaviya, though he wanted the University to be strictly vegetarian, had to compromise in making arrangements for non-vegetarian kitchens. Hindu identity was open to all.

Ideas of the Hindu revivalism heavily influenced Hindu identity at BHU. Derived from the Orientalist and nationalist interpretations of Hindu tradition, concepts of identity defied particularization. They de-emphasized caste, ritual, and traditional practices to the point of down playing religion and religious difference. 'All religions are one' was a popular phrase of the time. Mahatma Gandhi defined religion broadly as a search for truth through non-violent means. A critic responded that so defined, Hinduism would cease to be a religion or a philosophy, and to speak of a Hindu in this sense would have no exact significance.

In a similar regard, Hindu identity had no exact significance. Those who participated in Hindu identity at BHU were from a wide range of social, economic, religious, and political persuasions. They were anarchists, loyalists, Marxists, socialists, and orthodox Hindus, and those who care for neither religion nor politics. The designation 'Hindu' told you little about a person's religion other than that they were not Muslims or Christians. Sikhs, Jains, and others were at times accorded Hindu identity regardless of their agreement. Someone could identify himself or herself as a Hindu without believing or practising anything in particular. Pride in Hindu identity was not equivalent to being antagonistic to Muslims, nor to being tolerant of other religions.

Religious identity was in effect divorced from traditional religious behaviour. Hinduism, instead of being identified very particularly with family, caste, sect, or regional traditions, was loosely defined as culture. These developments were accompanied by a sense of expansive identity. The students found themselves not only part of a large Hindu body at BHU, but also of a larger and powerful entity of fellow Hindus across India. This sense of religious identity, which no longer depended upon how many *rudrakshas* (prayer beads) passed through one's hand, was the Hindu identity that flowed from BHU.

Again, this religious identity was neutral. There was nothing malevolent in its character. The formation of such a religious identity was

nurtured at BHU, but it was not created, nor totally contrived at BHU. It was a product of its time. This diffuse identity flowered in many ways. There were Gandhian graduates of BHU who embraced this identity. There were socialists. Students participating in this identity poured forth from the University into all parts of India. Ironically, it was this identity which paved the way for the politicizing of religion. It provided a basis for Hindu nationalism, the tie that could bind. Any Hindu could belong and any Hindu could call upon it for his or her purposes. When religion was associated with culture instead of personal duty and devotional practice, it was easy for the politicians to invoke religious fervour against anything that could be interpreted as threatening culture. Political rivals, once regarded as only the other team, could be demonized as mortal enemies. The inhumane acts that could follow were made possible by the manifestation of identity called religious nationalism. This manifestation of Hindu identity, however, was not in evidence at BHU in its early years.

The BHU developed at the centre of forces that created Hindu identity. The British, the religious orthodox, and the Indian nationalists all participated in its establishment. As Hindu identity emerged, the allegiance of the University shifted from allegiance to the Raj to fervent nationalism. But the original goals of the founder remained the same. Pandit Malaviya wanted to restore pride among the Hindus of India. He did not want students to feel inferior in any way to the British. At the University, students were introduced to western scholarship on India, so they would gain a sense of their past and the riches of their culture. Mastering western education, students were to be imparted a sense of equality and accomplishment. Against the British stereotyping of the Hindus as weak and degenerate, they would learn to stand up against political domination and personal disparagement. The students of BHU gained a reputation for their nationalist activism against the British rule. Though this hindered employment of BHU graduates in the British government, the University prepared students for employment in other areas, thereby freeing them from positions of subordination. As one former student remembered:

> We knew that ICS [Indian Civil Service] jobs would not be a by-product of BHU. Technical education would lead to jobs with companies. Education in arts and social science would lead to private jobs—doctors, lawyers. The university was considered free—not structured by the government.[2]

2 A. K. Narain, interview, Banaras, September 1997.

With pride in themselves and their culture and the education they received at the Hindu University, graduates were able to assume authority and power in industry, agriculture, education, and eventually in the government of independent India.

The Hindu education that developed at BHU during the years of the Indian independence movement nurtured a broadening of the definition of religion. The presence of a diverse University population, coupled with the embracing of modernity, lead to the definition of religion that was not confined to the practice of rituals and the adherence to certain duties and codes of behaviour. Religion was defined in its broadest sense as part of a society's culture. The resulting notion of Hindu identity was expansive enough to unite the student population of the University and provide a sense of pride with which to resist British domination. The Hindu education, for which the University was known, nourished a Hindu identity and exported it throughout India with its graduates. A religious identity freed from the fetters of religious observance, but not excluding religious observance, was one that corresponded to wider the changes in Indian society. This newly developed religious identity was not anti-Muslim in essence, but neutral. Further, it was, diffuse enough to allow the participation of Hindus of varying persuasions and traditions. Embracing modernity and binding religion with culture, the religious identity that emerged at BHU also provided a basis for the politicizing of religion and the rise of Hindu nationalism.

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PERIODICALS

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